

***Performance as relationship: memory, materiality and process in the  
site-specific practice of in situ:***

Isobel Margaret Campbell Stewart  
(BELLA STEWART)

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
awarded by

De Montfort University, Leicester

November 2007

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Tess Buckland for her invaluable help and support in the final stages of this project, and Dr Helena Goldwater for her perceptive comments on the final draft.

My research began almost ten years ago with the first performances of the company that was to become *in situ*. The performance works I have written about in this thesis were created by non-professional performers, all of whom gave generously of their energy, time and considerable imaginative resources. Over long rehearsal periods, usually several months, they remained open, seemingly endlessly adaptable and consistently surprising and creative; I am grateful to all of them. Over the years, *in situ* was sustained by a core of these collaborators, and I am indebted in particular to Steve Adams, Brandon High, Iain Coleman, Geoff Broad, Sakura Nishimura and Tim 'Pligget' Waterfield. Pete Arnold, a co-founder and joint artistic director of the company, used his extraordinary technical expertise and inventive flair to give another dimension to the experience of an *in situ* performance.

Most importantly, for reasons artistic and personal, my greatest debt is to Richard Spaul, *in situ*'s driving force, co-founder and the director or co-director of all the company's work to date. A word of thanks here cannot adequately express what his support, encouragement, humour, love and inspiration have meant to me.

Part-time PhD research always has the potential to become an extremely long-haul. In my case, it took the best part of ten years. I know that I must count myself privileged and extraordinarily lucky to have had - from the very beginning - dedicated, skilled and sensitive supervision. Nicholas Arnold travelled to attend our performances, was constantly encouraging and supportive, intellectually challenging and inspiring, dug me out of holes, was always *involved*. Nicholas' belief and commitment meant I never once felt like giving up; I think this is rare for a part-time PhD student. A cliché it may be, but it is nevertheless true and fair to say that I could not have done this without him.

My 'second' supervisor was the late Professor Julia Briggs, whose extraordinary generosity, warmth and intellectual dynamism ensured that her involvement in this project belied that secondary role. Her support, guidance and inspiration continue to nourish me and it is with gratitude that I dedicate this thesis to her memory.

Bella Stewart  
Cambridge  
December 2009



**Performance as Relationship: Memory, Material and Process in the Site-Specific  
Practice of *in situ*:**

**Abstract**

Beginning with an exploration of aspects of the audience-performer relationship, and using as a framework a personal reflection upon my own experience of five hitherto-undocumented, early (1998-2002), site-specific performances by *in situ*., the thesis is an account of a particular practice as fundamentally relational. Central to this is my own experience of the performance-making processes, as performer, director and audience member. These processes include those of my own memory and reflection. Thematic concerns, illuminated by the individual pieces in question, are explored through a reflexive writing practice that emphasises the experience of performance as both presenced, material, and bodily and at the same time operating through psychic processes of memory and association. I explore aspects of psychoanalytic practice, in particular that which draws on Object Relations, and the concept of the Transference-Countertransference dynamic, as analagous to my experience of the intimate and particular performance practice of *in situ*.. This opens the way for an examination of the way in which the material elements of performance are deployed in the formation of an associative network that holds memory, identity, event and materiality in active relationship. The embodied experience of being in proximity to others in space during performances is therefore foregrounded. I propose that this forms the basis from which *in situ*.'s performance situates itself in relationship with the real (concrete, material and present) and the imagined (ephemeral, remembered and transient). Voice is here reformulated as part of the material of performance through its bodily origin, and vocal practice is in turn connected to the performance of absence and the encounter with mortality. *in situ*.'s performance practice is also aligned with my relationship with, and understanding of, certain contemporary interpretive archaeologies, and I allow these perspectives to inform a process of reflection on my work with *in situ*.. Like archaeological practice, this is experienced by me as being in a relationship with time and memory, realised through connections with objects, space and materiality.

*Performance as relationship: memory, materiality and process in the site-specific practice of in situ:*

**Contents**

Introduction. Performance as relationship: memory, materiality and process in the site- specific practice of *in situ*:.....1

Chapter One. Intimate languages: the audience as self and other.....17

Chapter Two. Memory, material and the dead: objects as self-states.....76

Chapter Three. Between selves: states of performance.....116

Chapter Four. Multiplying presence, evoking absence: texts and voices in *The Macbeth Project*.....154

Chapter Five. *Without History*: material bodies and the siting of memory.....191

Conclusion. ....231

Bibliography.....242



## Introduction

### *Performance as relationship: memory, materiality and process in the site-specific practice of in situ:*

*Writing about performance practice, especially if it is one's own, has affinities with practice itself. It is work that involves memory, the retrieval of detail; there are accidents and surprises. Also, significantly, the work of writing is similarly proliferative, as well as selective, in that of itself it seems to generate thoughts, insights and associations, much in the way that 'doing' performance does. Perhaps it is in the nature of performance practice - and within this I include all the stages and processes of performance-making - to be a kind of 'curating' of experiences. Because performance is something that is done, it is a re-making, and this sometimes makes it a work of conversion, substitution and repetition, as much as of transformation and imagination. Insofar as this is the case, writing through or about performance is a continuation of its processes by other means. The performances discussed here were all in the past by the time I came to write about them. I have sought, through writing, to re-combine my thinking about my performance practice, the ideas and influences I bring to it, with processes, events and images that must now be reconstituted largely from memory. This remembering of devising, rehearsing and performing becomes here a secondary practice, a writing of performance out of a re-experiencing or reconstruction that puts me into a specific relationship with aspects of my own past.*

My thesis is a particular kind of 'writing through' performance practice. It is based upon the work of a particular company, *in situ:*, over its first five years (1999 - 2004). The work of *in situ:* has been in part my own work, that is to say, I co-founded the company, and still perform, teach, and sometimes direct for, and with, it. All the pieces described in this thesis, I was, to a greater or lesser extent, *inside*. This means that the perspective is dependent not only upon what I saw, heard and took part in as performer, or observed



as director, but also upon my memory of these phenomena. I have some notes (see Appendix), but these are not comprehensive; they do not cover every piece written about here, and they do not refer to the entire process for any piece. In other words, they are fragmentary, inconsistent, not a record. They have value because they were written in the present of the work and I have been able to use them as an *aide memoire* to help me to access experiences which may have been wholly or partially lost to memory. I have used these experiences, or rather my memories of them, selectively, to consider those aspects of performance in general into which *in situ*'s practice seems to me to offer insights. It is important to emphasise that the work, the performances, *came first*, at least in the sense that I, we, did not make them to test theories, nor in response to, or rebellion against, any other way of doing things, nor to have something to write about. In another sense, the performances, and the body of work they constitute, are coeval with this thesis.

I began research in 1999, after *Inferno* and during the devising process for *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* Work on the former had encouraged me to explore how the audience had been approached and imagined in experimental performance practices in the post-war period. I began the first drafts on this almost a year later, but these did not coalesce into Chapter One of this thesis until some time after that. Working on *Father...* allowed me to reflect upon the psychoanalytic ideas that had interested me for so long, but, again, I did not begin writing on this until the full first draft in 2005 - 2006, when I had a sense of how the thesis might be structured.

Working full-time (in a totally unrelated area - I was a librarian in an Economics department for nearly all the research period), working on the performances, and conducting research into performance (and ultimately writing more intensively) created an uneasy and often precarious environment for anything that might have been called a project. That the focus of the research should be the performances made by *in situ*: from its inception to *Without History* only really emerged in the months after that piece had ended, when I looked at the writing I had and saw that I was using my remembered experiences in the earlier performances to think with. The process of research that has produced this thesis is thus characterised by delayed response, periods of fallow and returns to attentiveness. Of course this is in part a function of the very long gestation



period, but this selective inattention during a large part of the process has profoundly affected the nature of the work.

What is written here is not based upon practice as research in the sense that I knew at the outset of *in situ*:'s practice that I would use it to write a PhD thesis. My intention was to explore aspects of performance, specifically the relationship between audience and performers, that interested me. Missing the elephant in the room, I think that when I began I regarded my own involvement in performance practice, as a performer, instigator, assistant director/dramaturge, simply as another manifestation of my interest in performance as a phenomenon.

It seems obvious in retrospect that my concerns in approaching performance and performance research - the audience, the constitution of inter- and intra personal relations, the position of text and vocality, and the relationship with mortality and materiality - would be realised, or at least detectable, in any practice I undertook. In fact, as *in situ*:'s practice emerged, so did the themes explored in this thesis clarify, and it became possible to place them in the context of *in situ*:'s work, and *vice versa*.

For the audience, *in situ*:'s is a multi-perspectival practice; there is no single optimal viewpoint, no best seat in the house. Of course, this is also true for me, for all versions of myself that appear in and through this piece of writing. For myself at the time of devising and performing the work, any perspective I had was derived from my position in the space, my role in the production overall (performer, co-director or a combination), and whatever activities I was undertaking in order to fulfil that role. This is something that, it is to be hoped, will be made clear through the descriptions and impressions of the work that I give throughout the thesis. But what is given originates, of course, with my perspective, and that at a distance that has brought into play the work of memory; writing from recollection reinscribes my own intimacy with the work as first and foremost a product of my remembering.. This intimacy is bound into my relationship to the thesis; it is in writing about it that I have negotiated a certain separation, and this has allowed me to re-examine some of the impetus for making it, and to re-formulate it as response.



## ***in situ*: background, personnel and process**

The inception of *in situ*: is itself constituted by a kind of negotiation, a re-founding of Cambridge Experimental Theatre (CET) within an explicitly extra-theatrical approach to practice and environment. A concern with the 'place of performance', not only in terms of environment, but also in relation to other fields of discourse (archaeology, psychoanalysis, documentary film) from which we derived inspiration for a more diversified creative practice, led Richard Spaul, Pete Arnold and me to form a new company. Prior to this, Richard Spaul's CET had evolved from a Theatre In Education (TIE) *cum* small-scale touring company, in the 1980s<sup>1</sup>, to a one-man, independent, teaching programme for non-professional performers. By the mid 1990s, 'graduates' of Richard's termly evening courses had begun to work, under his direction, in large-scale ensemble productions, usually devised through performer-generated material, and subsequently scripted. These were studio-based pieces, self-funded through fees paid for the teaching and development that took place in the course of creating and performing the work. Beginning with a forty-five-minute piece inspired by Brueghel's *The Triumph of Death* (1992; I began working with CET with this production), and continuing through works dealing with the effects of war on the human psyche (1994-5's *These who die as cattle*, and *Pour out my heart like water*, based on Euripides' *Women of Troy*, in 1996), this aspect of CET's work was far outside the bounds of what is usually undertaken within the 'amateur', at least in British theatre. More extraordinarily, there was no selection of performers on grounds of perceived talent; everyone who had come through the workshops and could offer the commitment to the development and rehearsal process could take part. Characters, roles and scenes were initially developed through improvisation; in this way each piece was adapted for its performers. With the inception of *in situ*:, workshops and courses continued, still producing a pool of performers available for ensemble work, but the integration of myself and Pete into a new company with Richard effected a change in approach to performance-making. My interests lay in exploring the broader concept of 'performance', away from its theatrical roots, and integrating my own background interests in archaeology and psychoanalysis

---

<sup>1</sup> Descriptions and discussion of some of CET's Shakespeare productions can be found in Holderness, 1993 and Wheale, 1991.



into a creative practice. Pete, by training an engineer, and with a PhD in biotechnology, had an interest in the integration of video and recording technology with 'live' performance. Beginning with *Inferno* (1998), his incorporation of dynamic camerawork and live relay into the temporal structure of performances gave *in situ*:'s productions a distinctive kinetic energy, derived both from Pete's physical movement around the space, and the sometimes rushing, shaky, blurred camera shots that accompanied it, shown on TV screens positioned around the space. A still, composed passage, with one or two performers seated in a room might be offset by a frenetically-moving picture resulting from the camera being carried upstairs and crashing into a bedroom. Certain other names recur in the company's composition for each of the performances described in this thesis. Tim Waterfield performed in *Inferno*, *Decameron*, *The Macbeth Project (TMP)*, and *Without History*. Steve Adams, Iain Coleman and Brandon High were in *Transmissions*, *Decameron*, *TMP*, and *Without History*. Geoff Broad and Sakura Nishimura were in both *TMP* and *Without History*. These performers formed a core group that gave the early *in situ*: performances a distinctive variety of different 'presences', performance personae that emerged from performers' everyday mannerisms, gestures and appearance, and were developed through performances, and from performance to performance. Their individual contributions, often derived from their own personal experience and expertise, and the ways in which they made them, have constituted the formation of a collaborative practice that remains at the heart of *in situ*:'s work into the present (see Appendix for cast lists for each performance discussed in the thesis).

It was in the early stages of rehearsal for CETs *Dracula* (1997) that we ended up working in a house, instead of Cambridge Drama Centre, where the production was to be staged. Prior to that, we had read about Kantor's wartime pieces, and Squat Theatre in Budapest (later New York; see TDR T86, 1978 *Private Performance Issue*); we began to wonder what it would be like to perform at home.

Already using promenade to alter the way the performance space was used and perceived, we were discovering that proximity to performers within a designated theatrical space appeared to create a certain unease, even anxiety, in audiences. Even



after we thought we had offered reassurances (that they wouldn't have to join in), and explained how it worked, they would search for seats. The odd chairs we put about for people to rest on would often be permanently occupied. They were never moved, even from their usual poorly-sighted spots. Audiences hung around the edges, followed the action only at cautious distances. Objects for examining and closely-played scenes were stranded in pools of space; a silently-agreed-upon 'performance distance' was being observed. Wherever lights shone, the audience moved into the shadows, afraid to be included in the scene.

We began to approach the performance as being within surroundings, an environment that an audience entered and was immediately part of, not something that had 'an outside' from which to observe it. We began to think of performances as installations: live, time-based and sensitive.

We were drawn to the domestic space, the house, as a possible means of realising something like a performing space. As Alan Read has pointed out, no space is truly empty, or innocent (Read, 1993; 161), and the domestic, in Britain at least, resonates with notions of privacy, territory, even withdrawal. In this sense, the house resists the category of public into which theatre at any rate, as a cultural activity, must fall. But the performative is more problematic. Houses, as homes, *living spaces*, have seeped into the performative by way of the self-expressive – fashion, foodways, the concept of *lifestyle*. The house contains public and private spaces, at once inviting scrutiny, interpretation, and reserving intimacy – closed doors, cupboards, drawers.

In the *Dracula* rehearsal, performers were sent around the house, and into the back garden. We asked them to fill it with the imaginary world of the novel – text, gesture, movement, voice. They carried lights, lay in beds, whispered inside cupboards. They encountered one another, and they found hiding places. As we walked through the house, we felt ourselves to be both inside the experience, and at a distance from it; we were distinct and separate from the performers, who seemed as much to haunt the space as to be physically sharing it with us. It seemed to us at this point that the multi-focal, simultaneous nature of the action, the sense that events were taking place not only in our presence, but in our absence too, had a creative potential that lay beyond promenade



theatre in studio spaces.

The formation of *in situ*: had its impetus in the desire to explore this relationship of space to performance, the constitution of intimacy in a performance context, and the role of an audience that is inside the performance.

Developing from earlier work in the large-group ensemble pieces of CET during the 1990s, *in situ*:’s practice is performer-led. Each performer brings his or her own perspective and associative material to the theme or central proposition of the piece, and work is undertaken from this point, from these positions, from ‘the place we are in’ (Lewis, 2000). In a house performance, like those described in the first four chapters of this thesis, a rehearsal cannot take the form of a planned run-through of all or some of the events of the performance as they are expected to take place in front of an audience. The performance is constituted by the process that produces it. It is not perfectible by repetition of the same events, nor is it usually possible to isolate specific passages or sequences of events and go over them until they work or run smoothly. The piece is composed in performance, and is performed over again, with the director(s) moving around, catching and missing different episodes, mimicking the experience of an audience member. I think of this as a sort of hybrid, *rehearsal-in-performance*, a cumulative and creatively reiterative practice that makes the work, not by locking it into place, but by stretching it this way and that, so that its range of movement within its designated space and time is always extending and extendable. It is this that I have attempted to convey, both as a quality of the practice for ourselves, and for an audience.

### **Aims and scope of the thesis, and the contribution to research in performance**

My original research proposal centred around an exploration of the role of the audience in contemporary performance, and, to some extent, the aim of the thesis is to provide some ways of seeing this, using the particular practice of *in situ*: as the main site of investigation. A research question would have been something along the lines of “How is the audience constituted by *practice*?”. As noted above, *in situ*:’s practice, and my



writing about it, thinking with it, grew into each other, and, as with practice, and with writing, the original question proliferates, spreads to other aspects of the work. Being, as it were, *inside* the practice, eventually allowed me to concentrate my approach into something that was at once narrower in focus, yet broader in effect, than the idea and roles of the audience 'alone'. I found it increasingly difficult to separate the audience from what went on in the performance, from what the performance *was*. The practice of *in situ*: incorporated a practice of audience most accurately described as a 'dramaturgy' (De Marinis, 1987). For *in situ*:s audiences, this becomes a relationship derived from the company's particular use of performance space and temporality. The performance has, or quickly develops, multiple foci, dispersing its audience, who choose where to be, what to be with, and what to miss. The fact of the audience's attention is made present as something to be drawn, engaged, formed within and by the performance. Several events may take place at once, and it is not possible to see the performance as a whole, because all perspectives are necessarily partial. The work of an *in situ*: performance is always a bringing-into-relationship its various thematic elements, persons, spaces, sensory phenomena. The main title of the thesis, *Performance as relationship*, reflects this dynamic of shared and negotiated presence within a particular physical and imaginal environment.

My primary aim has been to begin an examination of the ways in which performance both constitutes and describes a relationship between its practitioners and those who experience it, within an engagement with particular forms and content - an encounter with the world outside its own space. By the time I was writing with a clear structure for the thesis in mind - early in 2005 - that relationship quite clearly included myself, the practitioner, reconstructing my own performances, my own activities, alongside those of others, both audience and collaborators. Secondly, I have set out to provide some sort of documentary record of a body of work that contains some aspects of practice that, if not unique, are, to my knowledge, unusual within the contemporary performance landscape. In the case of *in situ*:, one of these characteristics is the company's position *vis-à-vis* traditionally-defined structures, especially categories of 'professional' and 'amateur', or 'community'. Touring, even to festivals, is logistically very difficult when practitioners are under constraints of time and availability, despite energetic, long-term,



commitment to the work. The effect of this places *in situ*., and any company in a similar structural position, under the radar, not easily able to gain access to potential audiences away from home. This is, of course, compounded by the nature of the site-specific practice engaged in; houses, although ubiquitous, are rarely sites of public practices<sup>2</sup>, and performing in them limits audience numbers dramatically.

There were no videos made of the performances I discuss here. That there is no audio-visual documentation of the work with which the thesis is concerned is in part a result of this separation from the usual channels of funding and publicity; this in practice meant that documenting our work was not prioritised. Not being under obligation to produce reports and other records, we did not at first incorporate this into our process. I have included still photographs where they are available (see Appendix). Current *in situ*: projects, since 2003's *Paradise*<sup>3</sup> have been recorded on video and DVD, as well as still photography. Limitations of time mean that it is difficult to record reflections on a process still at work.. Having worked largely from memory, and a few supplementary notes from rehearsals, I have chosen to attempt re-tracings of the experience of moments of performance through sections of text that adopt a descriptive, even performative, writing style. These appear in italicised paragraphs and have the status of a sort of written DVD, or rather a description of my own memory of the performance as if it were on-screen. In producing them, I have tried to render my memory of my experience of the moment, not necessarily in its detail and complexity, but rather to write from the place I was in. On reading them back, I can feel that the 'snapshots' are not quite enough, but, in their unsteadiness, nevertheless offer something of the quality of the performances' fabric of encounters and eavesdropping as I experienced it.

Finally, I have sought to explore some of the ways in which the essentially interactive,

---

<sup>2</sup> Laura Godfrey-Isaacs' 'home' gallery/'salon' space in Camberwell is a notable exception. This is an occupied home that hosted a series of performances and installations, mainly by solo artists, from the late 1990s until recently. The last 'Salon' performance took place in 2005 ([www.lgihome.co.uk/](http://www.lgihome.co.uk/)). Prior to this, in 1994, the Nottingham-based Anglo-German performance group, Gob Squad, staged 'House', a one-off performance in "a disused suburban home". This shared some of the characteristics of *in situ*.'s work, including the free movement of the audience. The piece was made up of a number of different scenarios, which gradually intermingled. Because of the disused, uninhabited nature of the house, the space was prepared specifically for the performance, this included carpeting a bedroom with grass ([www.gobsquad.com/](http://www.gobsquad.com/)).

<sup>3</sup> A studio-based performance, which was funded by a small regional arts grant. It was directed by Richard Spaul, and performed by Pete Arnold and Bella Stewart, in Cambridge Drama Centre in March 2003.



relational and multiple practice of site-specific performance might constitute itself as an 'inter-discipline', stretching far beyond its traditional paradigms of the theatre and postwar visual arts. I am not alone in coming to performance from a background that is outside these fields - early medieval history and literature, later moving towards archaeology (at a time when it was beginning to use theories and ideas from other disciplines to address its own concerns<sup>4</sup>), and an ever-present fascination with the ideas and experience of psychoanalysis. As touched on above, one of the motivations in the formation of *in situ*: was a desire to explore a performance practice that might be as much a mode of enquiry as a means of showing; the connection to non-theatrical fields was in this sense as important as situating the practice in non-theatrical spaces.

The scope of the thesis, at least in those chapters where material from psychoanalysis and archaeology forms the predominant discursive context, is therefore not strictly within the boundaries of performance and theatre studies scholarship. It has been my intention to look at *in situ*:’s performance practice *through* these other discourses, as much to discover how they themselves might have affinities with performance within their own practices. It is, of course, not accidental that the points of contact are where the main thematic concerns of *in situ*: lie - the constitution and relationship of individual and collective/historical memory, and its materiality as manifest in the connection to the world as object, site and bodies. I, we (that is, *in situ*:), are drawn to these fields of enquiry as a way of discovering relationships with the world, as much as we use performance to explore and extend those relationships.

Through this, the thesis makes some contribution to a discussion of the nature, value and meaning of disciplinary boundaries, and what it might mean to engage in an interdisciplinary practice, but this is necessarily through the prism of my own relationship to and experience of these phenomena

As research, the thesis itself must be considered a kind of performance, in the sense that it can almost be said to stand in (in the absence of other, fuller, documentation) for the practice upon which it is based. As noted above, the thesis provides a record, at least a description of the beginnings of *in situ*:’s practice - I hope a 'thick description' (Geertz,

---

<sup>4</sup> Some of this material is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. In terms of archaeological theory overall, it is of course highly selective, but I have chosen to draw on those perspectives that are germane to my own thinking about the connections between performance and archaeology.



1972), where context and sub-context can also be examined. The company's practice, and my place within it, is such that I have sought to foreground my own experience of it, to enable me to think with and about performance as a relationship, a set of practices that is profoundly and fundamentally *collaborative*. This is true not only for the participants, *in situ*'s practitioners, but also for the audience, and for myself, standing with, and between, both.

### **General structure of the thesis and outline of the chapters**

The succession of chapters within the thesis follows a dual logic. Firstly, there is a chronology of practice, in that the first chapter is based around the first house-based performances, and so on until the fifth and final chapter, dealing with the most recent production written about here, 2002's *Without history*. The Chapter One performances took place over 1998 and 1999, before the company 'properly' re-formed as *in situ*;, in the second chapter, the performance that forms the basis of discussion is *in situ*:'s nominal debut, *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* (2000). The third and fourth chapters deal with performances from 2000 and 2001.

Within this chronologised structure lies a sort of promenade progress through the major thematic concerns of the company's work. While the issues foregrounded are particularly prominent within the individual pieces discussed through them, I wish to emphasise that this is not, and cannot be, exclusive. Object Relations, the Transference and our relationship with the dead are as embedded in Chapter Five's *Without history*, just as the constitution of memory through material and bodily presence is central to *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* Each chapter begins with a contextualising discussion of the concerns I intend to examine through my account of *in situ*:'s practice. In these sections, I draw, necessarily selectively (as noted above) on scholarship, practices and experiences that have influenced my thinking and writing about, and making, performance. After giving an outline of the performance events, I knit together these elements in a discussion of the piece within this broadly 'theoretical' context.



Chapter One: *Intimate languages: the audience as self and other*, introduces the work of *in situ*: in the context of approaches to the audience. This, as I have noted above, was my own way in to the research. Despite standing at the beginning, the theme of the audience gives the thesis its thematic core, as it is the encounter with others, as observers, interlocutors, witnesses, that lies at the heart of a performance practice<sup>5</sup> that I have conceived as a *relationship*. This opening chapter is therefore necessarily very long and detailed, with an exploration of some of contemporary practice's 'lineage' with regard to attitudes to the audience. The placing of performers and audience within one space emphasises the elements of their interchangeability (of 'standing in') as presences in the specific space of an *in situ*: performance. The discussion centres upon an attempt to reformulate the relationship as a negotiation around the meanings of proximity and intimacy within a context that is constituted by both separation and participation. It is within, and *as*, this relationship that performance itself is negotiated.

The following chapter, *Memory, material and the Dead: objects as self-states*, constitutes an early, rather inward, or internalising, interlude. Here, I have drawn upon certain aspects of psychoanalytic theory, most notably the field of 'Object Relations, the ideas of transference and countertransference to form the basis of a sort of re-description of *in situ*:'s 2000 *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* as a meditation on the relationship between the living and the dead. This is seen through the audience relationship, and through the world of material objects. It is also bound into my own practice of memory, which the performance was itself addressing in part through its (auto)biographical core. Writing this chapter, which took place substantially in 2005, building on writing produced in 2001 and 2002, placed me in a complex of memory-work that even now reconfigures itself palpably and visibly, like the turning of a kaleidoscope, whenever I think about *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* Some of this material is subject to a further examination in Chapter Five, in an externalising, outward version, centring upon the relationship between performance practice and archaeology - itself a practice that has often been compared with psychoanalysis.

---

<sup>5</sup> Adrian Heathfield, in his 1997 PhD thesis, *Representation and identity in contemporary performance*, locates performance's primary other in death itself, making an encounter, if not a dialogue, with mortality.



In the third chapter I foreground the work of the performer, and differing strategies for manipulating presence in performance. In doing so, I begin with a critical discussion of a practice of acting that presents itself as emulating 'natural' speech and interaction, and which is pervasive in contemporary film and television, as well as in stage interpretations of modern and contemporary plays. As such, it has become something of a paradigm, and I designate this as Acting, with a capital A. Using *in situ*'s exploration of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, I examine the idea of Acting as a sort of fantasy, imagined by audiences and performers to be fulfilling and exciting in its promise of access to other selves, glamorous fantasy worlds internal and external, but in fact a practice that can also be seen as continually sabotaging itself as it seeks to close down real events, connections and proliferative phenomena. Although my description of Acting is based upon a by now familiar postmodern critique, I seek to place my examination of *Decameron* as centring on its playing out of this desire to Act, and the fragility of attempts to do so. I focus on the use of a variety of strategies used by performers to get through fictions, stories and tasks within a succession of transitory self-states sponsored by events and encounters within the performance environment. Once again, the practice is shown to foreground itself, its *materiality*, the predicament of presence that is shared by audience and performers in the space it occupies.

From Acting, and the postmodern performance practices that re-interpret and interrogate it, Chapter Four examines *in situ*'s approaches to text and voice, primarily through a discussion of the company's 2001-02 house performance, *The Macbeth Project* (hereafter *TMP*), which used the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as its central, driving 'engine'.

I begin with a discussion of performative textual practices that uses a deliberately narrow frame of reference, in the form of three well-known and highly influential performance companies, The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, and Goat Island. These three companies have specific, practice-based, approaches to text that have either had a direct influence upon *in situ*., or resonate strongly with aspects of the company's own work, and I have chosen them primarily for this reason. They are also widely-documented, and this means that their work is available in some form after it has been



performed, and to those who have not seen it. As such, the performances of such companies, and their documentation and commentary, form a context, or matrix, for the work of companies like *in situ*:. Focusing upon these three has allowed me to explore the resonances of their approaches for *in situ*:’s work more closely than if I had selected a broad field and sought similarities and trends within it.

The idea of the actorly, trained voice is replaced by the intimate register of the unproduced, uninflected, natural voice, made audible, along with its ‘grain’ (Barthes, 1977: 179), by microphone. I suggest that the use of the human voice is rendered problematic within performance practices that seek to interrogate the theatrical because of its association with the emotional expression, and representation of emotion, perceived to be central to Acting. This may lead to a certain caution, if not embarrassment, around the use of voice beyond the register of low-key, everyday, speaking. *in situ*: has explored vocal practice extensively within the context of a practice that has drawn upon, and is influenced and inflected by, the work of companies mentioned above, rather than those working from traditional theatre training. The influence of Roy Hart Theatre practitioners has allowed *in situ*: to develop a vocal practice, used in conjunction with text in performance, that remains consistent with a project of destabilising and interrogating the possibility of representation. The use of voice in the company’s practice has permitted a re-examination of ideas of emotion and the imaginary in its formulation of new performance, and also provided a means by which external, outside influences (which might otherwise be dismissed as elements of a naïve adherence to constructs of fiction and fantasy) can be presented in performance through performers’ bodies.

Vocalisation, evoking the presence of performing bodies in the past, and thereby giving space to what is absent, is central to *Without History*, the focal *in situ*: performance of the fifth and final chapter. With this piece, the setting changed from the private house to the public and particular space of a museum, specifically the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (hereafter CUMAA). This produced a re-opening of our thinking around the relationship of material objects, and of bodies themselves, to the passage of time and the constitution of human memory and self-



identity. These themes, internalised, personal and familial in *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* (hereafter *Father...*), are here re-configured as an exploration of the idea of mortal remains. I have relied heavily upon writings from recent archaeological theory, themselves drawing upon social and psychoanalytic theory (Shanks and Tilley, 1987a; 1987b; Hodder, 1990; Shanks, 1992; Holtorf, 2006) and philosophy (Thomas, 1996) to reformulate ways of thinking about archaeological practice and approaches to the past in the present. These approaches are often referred to as 'postmodern', 'post-structuralist' or 'post-processual'<sup>6</sup> and, while I am aware that they do not represent archaeological theory and practice across the board, they are nevertheless highly influential. In *Without History*, objects and bodies are mapped onto one another in an economy of imaginative substitution that resonates with the roles of audience and performers as discussed in preceding chapters. The standing-in of performance is here actively compared to the work of archaeology as a bodily practice in space. The terminology of bodily practice itself reflects the influence of Foucauldian notions of the body as a locus and site of social and cultural signification, upon archaeology and the disciplines upon which it draws. Examining institutions, like prisons and hospitals (1969; 1979), or social phenomena, as in the case of sexuality (1977) and language (1970), Foucault emphasised the role of the body as the very material of social discourse, in other words, its *performative* potential.

*Without History* is described as 'performing the museum' as an attempt to gather together the variety of human presence that includes the dead and distant. Concluding with this chapter, I seek to emphasise, that, in *in situ*:'s practice, performance is not only fundamentally a relationship, but also a playing-out of the *predicament* of mortality, through the interchangeability of ghosts and material.

Within each chapter I have included italicised passages that describe moments or passages in the performance under consideration. While these are written from the perspective of an audience member encountering the action described, the descriptions

---

<sup>6</sup> See Michael Shanks' contributions to the Introduction to his and Mike Pearson's *Theatre/Archaeology* (Routledge, 2001) for a succinct, if personal, account of these recent developments in archaeological theory.



are mine. They originate with my memories of the performances and the thoughts and associations evoked by them for me. Although they cannot be definitive, and have only the authority of my own experience, I have included them, in the absence of audio-visual documentation of the *in situ*: performances written about here, as a means of presencing the work within the text. They constitute snapshots of the performances, and my intention is to supply for the reader some sense of what was actually happening at any given moment.



## Chapter One

### Intimate languages: the Audience as Self and Other.

#### Introduction

The presence, in some form, of an audience, is constitutive of performance. Where performance takes place outside culturally designated or traditional spaces, including the black box studios favoured by many contemporary performance practitioners, the role, nature and practice of the audience becomes integral. The audience is placed or places itself, is activated, and/or active. The bodily presence of non-performers becomes marked; even to the extent of becoming part of the show. It is this placing that is central, as it is this that is no longer assumed. In a performance that offers the audience no particular physical territory from which to stand apart from it, the relationship between the different presences of performers and audience is necessarily under scrutiny. It can be said that such a practice in fact *activates* this relationship, and, in so doing, re-formulates *itself* as a relational practice .

Nick Kaye, in his introduction to *Site-specific art: performance, place and documentation* (2000) explicitly identifies site-specific practices with "... a *working over* of the production, definition and *performance* of 'place'." (ibid.: 3) He derives this in part from Minimalism's foregrounding of the temporal and spatial context of the actual viewing the work of art (the place it is in), and in doing so, traces the lineage of site-specific performance through visual art, rather than theatre. This was, in fact, referred to in terms of its *theatricalisation* by the critic Michael Fried, in an influential and much-quoted essay of 1967<sup>7</sup>. Fried's formulation of Minimalist art, which he tellingly dubs 'literalist', notes with distaste its apparent concern with "... the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters [the] work", which is "... an object in a situation - one that, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder*" (ibid. Emphasis in original). From such a perspective the work of art is compromised by this; it cannot exist for itself, to be contemplated from outside, bestowing a transcendent experience upon the viewer. From now on, it is implicated in a web of relationships that explicitly

---

<sup>7</sup> Fried [1967], reprinted in Harrison and Wood, 1992: 825.



includes the physical, the corporeal, its own presence in the world and that of its viewers.

With this description, and the debate of which it was a part, the presencing of the audience enters the discourse as fundamental to the experience of not only this, 'literalist' or Minimalist art, but, by extension, potentially all artistic practice, as central to its ideological positioning within the entire economy of cultural production. To evoke a completely autonomous artwork, in which the beholder has no share, is of course antithetical to any performance practice, including traditional theatre (see Kaye, 1994: 3).

The domestic space which is the primary site for *in situ*'s work suggests a reworking of the notion of the site-specific in performance. Here, the specificity of the residential setting is not necessarily foregrounded, while its particularity, its presence as an occupied house, is brought into play to unsettle the performance as a situated sequence of events. Performers, directors and audience members are all aware that they are in a house, surrounded by the undisguised and unmediated material lives of the occupiers. The setting is already a place, and remains so throughout the performance, where there is no attempt to hide its particular attributes and contents, or change them for that of another space. The site of *in situ*'s performance thus co-habits with everyday life, with non-performance. Depending on what, if anything, is taking place performatively in a given room, the performance occupies the spaces of the house with varying degrees of intensity at various points. There may be moments for audience members where they enter a room that the performance has somehow, for them, momentarily vacated, leaving a sense of something just missed, or something impending. What is waiting or recollecting is the room itself, part way between its own habituation and that of the performance.

In this way, spaces in the house, and indeed the domestic space as a whole, assume a provisional identity as a space of performance - it is not evacuated, like Brook's 'empty space', to house it, nor is it allowed to remain itself, or a specific version of itself, for a performance to be built around and addressed to it.

This latter formulation includes the practice of presenting a - usually specially devised -



performance in a particular setting, a historic building, or a certain district of the city where the content of the performance refers directly to its history, geography, topography, its spaces and local associations. This approach, used most notably by the now-disbanded Welsh performance company Brith Gof (see Pearson and Shanks, 2001 for an account of their work), immerses performers in a complex of past, present and potential biographies of place, and calls up different readings and perspectives through the material presence of the environment. This creates a practice of profound *situating*, whereby the space of performance is rendered as itself in multiple aspects, through narrative, association and the physical presence of human actors.

Reflecting upon *in situ*:'s practice in the house, I experience it when performing as a kind of reversal of inhabiting, whereby the performance space is not outside me, is not my immediate environment as such, but constitutes itself by passing through me to the exterior *as I perform there*. I perform *with* the space, rather than *in* it. If I have chosen to perform particular actions in a particular room, the collaboration seems stronger, and the room's habitual identity becomes for me, through repeated interaction, shared with its identity as the site of that performance. I see this as analogous to the way in which I remain myself while performing, when my body is shared with a version of myself-in-performance.

Watching other performers working in the house gives me a similar experience of double or even multiple occupancy. I sense the space, however familiar, as made strange, taken in, re-configured and set out anew by someone else. If I return to it afterwards, it is altered subtly by my recollection of that experience; it becomes *the place where....*

*in situ*:'s house performances are not site-specific in Kaye's (2004) definition, but they do not seek to efface the particularity of their setting. Through their setting, they perform the effect of performance on space, as if performance is done *on* them rather than *in* them (see my discussion on the relationship of performance and text in Chapter Four below).

For performance practitioners engaged with what can be broadly considered to be postmodern approaches (see Freeman, 2003, 138ff for an outline of how such



approaches may be defined with reference to performance), the problematising of representation itself places the audience *alongside* practitioners in the negotiating of transient, multiple and actively *produced* meanings.

For *in situ*., thinking about the audience is part of the process of making performance; how those *other than ourselves* will place themselves in relation to what we have made. As a piece is made and performed-in-rehearsal (a practical concept distinct from conventional notions of rehearsal and differing from performance in the absence of a live audience), we formulate and re-formulate audiences in their absence. Our imagined audiences allow the processes of making performance to take place as conversations with ourselves-as-others - where will I stand to witness this? what interests me here? why am I turning away from this? I am distracted, bored, intrigued, confused.

As a performer, making moves and developing strategies in the process of performance-making, this imagining of the audience is necessarily (for me) a multiplication of myself. I consider myself and what I am doing from the outside, I attempt to put myself in the place of another, any other, but of course, that other has my sensibilities, my reactions, my aesthetic preferences and interests. They stand in another place, in the place of the audience, a version of myself as audience. This is of course to oversimplify, and to ignore the complexities of self-formation and self-observation. Perhaps I perform for an imaginary audience as a sort of ideal self, in which I might partake through their imagined satisfaction at my performance.

As a director, my position is different. I am myself an audience for the performers, and I am in their presence thinking about what they are doing as I experience it., and they are aware of this. They might imagine me, as their audience, in a particular way, as someone looking at their work with a view to changing it, suggesting they do less, or more, or something altogether different. When I am performing, and the director comes in and is my audience, I am aware of this myself. I put myself beside him, my other that was my audience is now another director. Directing in the context of *in situ*.'s practice affords me an experience that is very close to that of the audience, as I have the privilege of free movement through the piece as it is happening. I make choices about where to go and whose work to watch at any given moment. When we stop performing and



discuss what we have done, the director offers comments, and so do the performers, who may question the director(s) about their perception of specific events or passages. In this way performers and director(s) compare insights and so articulate the reactions of the hitherto-imagined audience.

It should also be noted that, because of the dynamic structure of *in situ*'s performances, which usually include a certain amount of improvisation and performer choice, performers themselves become a specific kind of witness to each other's work. In a way that directors and actual audience cannot, they can actively intervene in the performance; they affect each other, but they also witness. Because of this, performers often discuss their own encounters with each other and offer responses.

Imagining the audience occurs as a complex of observation and incorporation of self-as-other and other-as-self. These imagined others/selves may be specific (how will the director see this? will my best friend notice I'm doing this? will my mother recognise my reference to this?) or they may be generic (if someone stood here, would they see what I'm doing? will I cause a bottleneck if I stop here?).

The imagined audience of such a performance process is not therefore *characterised*, in the sense that the audiences of arts marketing, agitprop or commercial theatre are, as 'in need of' (educating, consciousness-raising, a happy ending, a good laugh, a good cry, a 'good night out'), nor of desiring, something specific, an experience that must necessarily be commodified in some way to fit. The nature and role of the site-specific audience is continuously subject to alteration and transformation through a series of proximities, states of closeness, intimate or potentially intimate relationships. Proximity to the action, sharing the space with performers, stands metonymically for the embeddedness of the audience throughout the process of performance. It is this that points towards a specific 'dramaturgy of the spectator', as formulated by Marco De Marinis in a 1987 paper of that title, where he notes that this includes both active and passive formulations of spectatorhood. In the former, the audience is acknowledged as bringing something to the work, making something of it in response; in the latter, it is the object of the performers' and director's artistic aims.



It is not, however, the *embodied* presence of the audience that appears to be germane to the formulation of De Marinis' definitions, for these audiences are for the most part physically separated from the work, they are not inside the performance. For a site-specific, intimately-placed audience, such as *in situ*'s, the question is never only 'what will they think/feel?', but also 'where will they place themselves?' It is this placing that is central to the site-specific practitioner's thinking through the audience, and which makes the theme of this opening chapter resonate throughout the whole thesis. It also resonates within *in situ*'s work. Including ourselves in the audience, we make, as Blau puts it, a 'Community of the Question' (Blau, 1990).

The audience is 'good to think with': this is a concept used by the anthropologist Mary Douglas to describe categories of phenomena - animals for instance - that possess a metaphoric flexibility that allows them to be used to explain and describe aspects of human experience other than that to which they are perceived to belong, (see Douglas, 2003 in particular). Beginning to think about it opens ways of moving across the spaces of performance themselves. Within the audience is the idea of performance as a series of encounters, encounters with an other, with internal and external selves, as an embodied experience, a dialogue of intimacy and distance. In the first section of this chapter, I explore some approaches to the audience as they have appeared in various theoretical writings on performance (including Blau), and on particular practitioners of the postwar period, specifically the Living Theater, and Richard Schechner's Performance Group.

The ideas I came across, histories and explorations I sought out, were in the first instance an attempt to forge an understanding of the context in which *in situ*: might be working, the tracing of a line, or more accurately, a series of places, incidents, events in the past. And these events are to a great extent self-selected - only those chronicled, written about, analysed, were available. In a practical sense, these are - for the most part - used (but not necessarily spent) theories. They have served the theatre practices they describe (and *vice versa*) and, more importantly, the social and cultural worlds from which they came. *in situ*: has made work *in the light of* some of these ideas and practices, or at least in the knowledge of them.



In a sense, there cannot really be a 'performance *theory*'. Performance is an experiential mode; it is something that cannot be done any other way. Of course, there are ways of approaching, and engaging with, and imagining it before it takes place, and ways of thinking about, describing and analysing it afterwards. It is these activities that must constitute a theorisation of performance, and they must always be returnable to something that has happened. Like archaeology, in the way it is approached and configured by the writers I have drawn upon in Chapter Five, performance is constituted not only as practice, but also as the activity of thinking about itself. This reflexivity has its root - for both practices - in the body, specifically as configured through Foucauldian notions of the body as the locus of social and cultural discourses of power, domination, resistance and the formation of identity<sup>8</sup>. Performance is also constituted by the action of bodies, performers and audience. De Marinis notwithstanding, the role of the audience has excited relatively little theoretical attention on its own account. Arguably, the most notable exception to this is Herb Blau's *The Audience* (1990), a dense and allusive piece of writing that amounts to what is almost a philosophy of theatrical spectatorship. As such it is the most comprehensive consideration of the role of the audience to date and it is useful to follow Blau's gaze, as it were, as well as adopt some of his terminology (particularly in his exploration of what he calls 'participation mystique') when discussing certain broad ideas. Consequently, I have written through Blau in important places, particularly in the examination of the audience-performer boundary. The participation enquiry quickly seeps into territories of implication, responsibility and community, and I discuss these aspects as specific formations of the political (see Read, 1993). Contemporary practitioners, like Forced Entertainment (Etchells, 1999) have discussed the implication of the audience in terms of witness, a concept with connotations that are both active and passive. This use of the category of witness returns us to a quasi-spiritual dimension that precipitates the interest in participation and its mystique, as well as notions of community. That performances happen, and are experienced by practitioners and audiences, many of whom go on to think, talk, write about and otherwise re-imagine or re-perform (very occasionally quite

---

<sup>8</sup> Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, in their *Social Theory and Archaeology* (1987b) is a good, and early, example of contemporary archaeological theory's engagement with thinkers such as Foucault, in particular his work on sexuality, incarceration, and medicine [1978, 1977 and 1967 respectively].



literally) what took place, itself creates something like a 'performance theory'.

The much-vaunted ephemerality of performance is frequently (I suspect, sadly, usually) compounded by a lack of documentation in the form of audio-visual material. This means that many significant works, once performed, have continued lives only in the memory of participants and audiences. Consequently, in place of, but certainly also alongside, and, importantly, *despite*, any writing and criticism, there also exists something like a folklore of performance, with its legendary moments and figures, and some of this has seeped into the cultural mainstream. This becomes a source of belief about certain artistic practices that are somehow outside that mainstream. Sometimes, it can form a part of what audiences and practitioners find themselves negotiating in making and experiencing performance. When potential audience members ask about duration, participation, physical discomfort, nudity, there is something at work that comes from performance's lost history, but which also tells us something about all performance's unique relationship with its audiences and audiences-to-be. This can only be part of what gives performance its value; its very nature as an experience, its resistance to commodification and dependence upon presence. Its eventhood situates it in time as well as space, and this in turn places it in relationship to individual and collective memory. The experiential nature of performance extends into how it can and cannot be apprehended.

The second section provides a broad introduction to *in situ*'s house performance practice. In describing the beginning of the company's work in this environment, I hope to show how themes, images and concerns are shaped by the contingencies, surprises, distractions, frustrations and constraints of practice (and practitioners) as much as reading and research. The practice of performance itself stands in for a specific kind of audience in this way: interpreting, memorising, responding to our abiding interests, imaginative worlds and idiomatic praxis. In turn, the work that the company has made, has made its own audiences. Discussing the early performance pieces - 1998's *Inferno* and the durational (six-hour) *Transmissions* of 1999, I examine ways in which ideas of audience practice and of performance practice are inevitably bound up with one another, and how these have come to influence the specific nature of *in situ*'s work. By taking a



practice which puts the performer into a specific imagined space, and working to make places within that space, I hope to illuminate the role of the audience as an imaginary construct which develops and informs the process of performance-making through rehearsal and beyond. This necessitates what is essentially an examination of that process in terms of the experience of the performer. The intention is to explore, if at all possible, what roles and representations an audience takes on in their absence, during the time of their potential - while the work is being made.

The third and final section of the chapter takes the form of a series of observations on the nature of the relationship between the material in the first section and that in the second.

I am interested in whether the approaches to, and experiences of, audience I have chosen to discuss are illuminated, altered, and/or made more or less relevant by *in situ*'s site-specific practice. It is not my intention to test anything; ideas and practices in performance are lived through, thought with, part of performance's dialogue with itself and those other formations of experience (psychoanalysis, theatre, archaeology) it encounters. If anything, my examination stands only as an invitation to reflect on these interactions. It is my own negotiation of how we might make and unmake the relevance of performance theory to performance practice. By extension, and because it is by no means irrelevant to a famously inter-, cross- and multi-disciplinary subject, this is also an exploration of how we might use encounters between performance and the imagining and practice of those others.

### **1.1 Approaching the audience: theories, perspectives, roles**

The term 'audience' sets apart a certain group of people within an event; they are thus separated, not exclusively or necessarily by where they are, but by what they are doing. It is this, the question of what they are doing, or what they should be doing, that forms the impetus for investigating the role of the audience. The relative scarcity of work addressing questions of audience perhaps stems from what appears to be a certain clarity within the relationship, at least in traditional Western theatre practices. The play is here;



the audience, the spectators, are somewhere else, able to hear and see it. Stage and auditorium. The basic design of a theatre, even in the present day, is the same, respecting a segregation of audience and performer. A space of performance implies another space, a space from which to watch it. A platform of rock before a painted cave wall in Lascaux gives rise to speculation about 'performances' - shamanic rites involving disguise (the fusing of animal and human bodies), dancing, chanting, light (see Schechner, 1988 : 68-70). The impossible gulf of time brings a reluctance to imagine the whole thing as theatre; Schechner's hypothesised fertility dance hesitates to place a watching audience in with the dancers:

"... this shape [of the dance] was known by the dancers and by the spectators (*if there were any*) ..." (ibid., p.70. My italics.)

The event as imagined is on the boundaries of theatre and ritual - as 'ritual theatre' it has a purpose, in this case the ensuring of fertility (of people and the wild animals they hunted).

Efficacy, effectiveness, is in the equation. This is another way of imagining the audience.

Even in the absence of observers, spectators at the ritual itself, an audience for such an event becomes the whole community on whose behalf it is enacted, on whom, ultimately, its effectiveness will be felt.

### **1.1.1 Audience: knowledge and relationship**

An audience may simply know something - know that there is a performance and that it is, somehow, its recipient. The audience's role begins with an encounter with performance itself. It is the audience who asks 'what is being performed?', even as performance is defined as something done 'for' or 'through' or even 'to' it.

I am told that in Saarbrücken, Germany, there is a memorial to the Jewish people of that town who were murdered in the concentration camps in the Second World War. Each person's name is carved into a paving stone laid in the town centre. The stones are face



down - the names are on the undersides. While an act of memorialising has been performed, is performed, without the presence of spectators, audience, visitors, it is augmented, or completed, or continued only through their knowledge of it. For a visitor, it is only a 'memorial', that is, they can only *take part in the performance* of memorialising, if they are aware of what lies beneath their feet. In this case, the meaning is carried by its very invisibility. It acknowledges and incorporates the desire to forget, to literally put out of sight, even as it commemorates.

With this anecdote in mind, we can begin to think about the audience as a *relationship* rather than as an entity. If the audience is a relationship made up of processes and encounters within a phenomenon called performance, then it is no longer *in a separate place*. The audience that shares the space of performance appears intermittently in the theoretical approaches with which this section deals. Through the practice of *in situ*:, this intermittence becomes embodied through the process of making performance that is *making a relationship*.

### 1.1.2 Sociology, reception and the 'model spectator'

The broadness of the field in what is called 'performance studies' has long made it impossible, and undesirable, to beat the bounds of the discipline (see Schechner, 2002 : chapters 1 and 2 in particular. Marvin Carlson's introductory comments in Carlson, 1996 offer an overview of the [inter-]discipline's place as a 'contested' concept in academic and artistic discourse). In one of its most specific concerns, performance studies draws upon theatre studies, and it is here that it is most differentiated from the exploration of broader cultural practices (including ethnographic approaches) that helps to constitute the discipline. This is where the audience is most closely identified with an entity, the group of people that sits in the dark, watching the action onstage.

The audience of the sociologically-based study is also, necessarily, an entity or a collection of entities. Audiences of film and television appear in surveys and larger-scale discussions that attempt to break them out of the homogeneity imposed on them by the scale of the studies<sup>9</sup>. These approaches have tended to concentrate on issues of

---

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Goodhardt, 1975, and Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998.



reception and response, often moving into studies of the effect of specific kinds of material or content on specific audiences <sup>10</sup>. Approaching mass media audiences in sociological terms is congruent with notions of film and television as primarily social practices (see Turner, 1993) that are not intrinsically the preserve of 'specialist' audiences.

Other work has concentrated on the broadly quantitative - information-gathering and analysis of audience reactions. The papers from a Utrecht conference on Performance Theory, held in 1987<sup>11</sup>, are concerned with physiological phenomena, such as heart-rates and body temperature changes in participants in specific live performance pieces (see, for example, papers by Hildebrand, Shoham, Konijn in the same volume). While these types of studies are rarely undertaken, they are nevertheless of value when considering theatre and its spectatorship within the broader arena of human behavioural phenomena. They, necessarily perhaps, lack sufficient connection with the study of the nature and context of performance itself to be of real value in a consideration of the role of the audience in cultural and creative terms. In addition, the specificity of approach often leaves such studies vulnerable to assumptions about the nature of theatre and performance itself, purportedly the subjects of investigation, but in fact often insufficiently interrogated and described practices that may be far from exemplary.

Susan Bennett, in *Theatre Audiences* (1997) is one of the very few authors to address the live performance audience as a central, stated theme. The treatment is closer to a scaled-down mass audience study of the sociological type in its approach, but situates the theme as a cultural phenomenon with a cultural context. Bennett's interests are in the role of culture, and specifically the role of theatre within that complex:

"... [T]he act of theatre-going can be a significant measure of what culture affords to its participants and what theatre itself contributes to cultural experience and expression. It is at the nexus of production and reception that the spectator exists."  
(Bennett, 1997, vii)

Her study sifts down into an application of literary reception theory (see Iser, 1978;

---

<sup>10</sup> For example women and violence (Schlesinger et al., 1992), children and violence (Van Der Voort 1986; Bazalgette and Buckingham 1995), children and advertising (Unnikrishnan, 1996), and British viewers and the developing world (Cleasby 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Collected in *Tijdschrift voor Theaterwetenschap*, Jaarg. 8(31/32), 1992.



Jauss, 1982; Eco 1981 and 1990) to the reading of theatre undertaken by its audiences. While Bennett's approach is too general (too homogenising?) to be of use here, reader-response theory's notion of the 'ideal reader' (Eco, 1981) is of some relevance. Within its original, literary context, this is an *internally conceived outsider* for whom any given author is writing - his or her audience singularised, individualised. The imagined conversation is then generalised into a hypothetical 'model':

"The ideal reader of 'Finnegan's Wake' cannot be a Greek reader of the second century B.C., or an illiterate man of Aran. The reader is strictly defined by the lexical and the syntactical organization of the text: the text is nothing else but the semantic-pragmatic production of its own Model Reader." (Eco, 1981 : 10)

Eco's statement contains, characteristically enough, a productive ambiguity - the text is the 'production' of its Model Reader in both a passive (producing them) and an active sense (it is also produced by them). This role in the production of meaning is accorded the audience in the earliest semiotic theorising of performance. In 1934, the Prague School critic Jan Mukarovsky proposed an aspect of the sign (actually the 'signified' of the work itself) as the *aesthetic* object. This is the idea of the work that resides "...in the consciousness of the public" (Mukarovsky 1978 : 211). The particular formation of audience attention is later privileged as being integral to the production-reception continuum of the staged work:

"... the audience is *omnipresent* in the structure of a stage production. The meaning of what is happening on stage but also of things on the stage *depends on* the audience and its understanding." (Mukarovsky, 1978, p.216. My italics.)

The performance is here the 'semantic-pragmatic production' of its own audience, and this would presumably hold true whether the piece is 'open' or 'closed'. An 'open' piece can contain a number of possibilities, of narrative, resolution, and meaning: it can be interpreted or taken in more than one way. The audience is offered, not only several possible 'ways in', but a variety of paths through the work, including some of which its creators may not themselves be aware. The success or otherwise of such a piece resides in the audience's engagement with its own creative encounter with it.



In the case of the latter, a 'closed' piece, however, the audience's understanding must replicate that of the director/performers/writers for it to have succeeded. The closedness of such a work is therefore derived from the need to ensure the minimal number of possibilities, to lead the 'understanding' in one direction only, to keep the piece free of ambiguities, indistinctness, obscurities. If the work is 'open', the audience brings to its understanding whatever it has to hand - personal experience, memories, associations, expectations derived from other experiences of performance. Its encounter with the work mirrors the processes undertaken by its creators in the use of their own intellectual, psychic and imaginative resources, which are already at work in individuals' ways of being in and encountering the world.

The notion of the text/performance as a 'production of', with the double articulation this implies, is characterised by Marco De Marinis in terms of the relative passivity and activity of the audience. In his 1987 article, *Dramaturgy of the spectator*, he writes:

"1. We can speak of a dramaturgy of the spectator in a passive, or, more precisely, objective sense in which we conceive of the audience as a dramaturgical object, a mark or target for the actions/operations of the director, the performers, and, if there is one, the writer.

"2. We can also speak of a dramaturgy of the spectator in an active or subjective sense, referring to the various receptive operations/actions that an audience carries out: perception, interpretation, aesthetic appreciation, memorization, emotive and intellectual response, etc. ... These operations/actions of the audience's members are to be considered truly dramaturgical (not just metaphorically) since it is only through these actions that the performance text achieves its fullness, becoming realized in all its semantic and communicative potential." (De Marinis, 1987, p.101)

De Marinis goes on to propose a 'Model Spectator' as a modification of Eco's term. This was considered in the context of a schema of performances that are 'open' or 'closed' - again following Eco. The latter are pieces that have a specific kind of audience in mind, one whose competencies and expectations are fairly precisely anticipated. Genre-based theatre often falls into this category. An 'open' performance is one in which the receivers are not clearly defined and the interpretations they might make, and the



perceptions they might have are not precisely conceived. A fixed, definitive reading is less likely to be imposed; it is the audience that has to work harder to formulate its own complex response to the piece. As De Marinis points out, it is this very 'openness' in a performance that can mean a narrowing down of the potential audience, when the spectator is required to:

"... possess a range of encyclopedic, intertextual, and ideological competence which is anything but standard. In this sense, as Eco has said, there is nothing more closed than an 'open' work ..." (ibid., p.104)

This is a conundrum for any work made for an audience: it is part of the question of who is speaking to whom, the omnipresent question of psychoanalysis. Performance is action. As such it allows its practitioners to articulate that which cannot be expressed by other means. In this its affinities are as much with the objects of psychoanalysis - hysteria, dreams and sex - as with the practice itself (see Chapter 2).

Post-war Western artistic practices have been, and are, fraught with anxieties about esotericism, obscurantism, elitism, self-referentiality; in short, their potential (or rather that of the figure of 'the artist') to *exclude* their audience. De Marinis goes on to state:

"The theatre of the avant-garde, while staunchly opposing the passive and standardized means of consumption found in mainstream theatre, has often ended up producing esoteric works reserved for a select band of "supercompetent" theatregoers." (ibid., 104).

According to De Marinis, the aim of a good (a 'good enough'?) theatre, a theatre like Barba's "Third Theatre", for example, should be to:

"... create performances which might allow a real plurality of reception or viewings which are equal to one another." (ibid., p.104)

"The common goal was specifically to favor a more active, engaged, and creative reception by audience members." (ibid., p.105)

Leaving aside questions of value here (a '*real* plurality'? a '*more* ... creative reception'? 'Real' as opposed to what? 'More creative' than what?), these designs on the audience



led to a practical interrogation of the spatial relationship of performer and spectator. The segregation into separate parts of the theatrical space is removed, and this means that the performance itself can no longer be grasped from one viewpoint, one place. It has a variety of perspectives, a plurality of viewings.

### **1.1.3 From ethnography to Utopia: ritualists, mystics, anarchists**

The performance thus passes from a unitary model to one which, paradoxically, acknowledges the fundamental and irredeemable separateness of each audience member, their idiom, their perspective, their imaginative worlds. The striving for openness here encounters the anxiety about exclusion, and the post-war performance practices caught up in this become interested in what is in practice a corollary of de-segregation - the dissolving of boundaries between audience and performers, between individuals. The unitary perspective is strangely re-configured as participation.

But participation in what? You could say that the 'aesthetic object' has passed from view along with the single viewpoint that beheld it. With the role and purpose of theatre in question (not so much "what is it for?" as "what can it do?"), new paradigms are brought to bear.

It is here that performance begins to draw on what I am calling the 'ethnographic', using the model of participatory ritual. This especially refers to ritual as understood as an artefact of otherness, whether the distant past, like the hypothesised performance practices of Palaeolithic cave art mentioned above, or of cultural/geographic distance, the socio-cultural worlds of tribal people living in remote, exotic, or otherwise 'non-Western' places.

The anthropologist Victor Turner, himself drawing on the ideas of his predecessor, Arnold van Gennep (Gennep, 1960) proposed a theory of ritual that emphasised its properties as an efficacious kind of performance (see Turner, 1974). Van Gennep's formulation of ritual action as it applies to social processes (i.e. marking stages of life, like the passage from childhood to adulthood) gives it three phases: preliminal, liminal and postliminal. The liminal is the most important of these; it is the site of change:



"The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between ..." (Turner, 1969, p.95)

Drawing on Turner's model, and upon work undertaken by himself in collaboration with Turner, Richard Schechner introduces the ideas of *transportation* and *transformation* into his analysis of performance (Schechner, 1985). *Transportation* applies to practices more commonly understood to be theatrical in the European-American model. This is a broadly aesthetic form, whereby audience and performers are brought into an imaginary world for the duration of the performance piece. It has the character of a contractual agreement lasting a fixed length of time. When it is over - when the action of the piece is completed - performers and audience return to normal, they simply leave the imaginary world behind them, and re-enter everyday life.

*Transformation* refers to performances that effect some alteration in those taking part as part of the purpose of the performance:

"Transformation performances are clearly evidenced in initiation rites, whose very purpose it is to transform people from one status or social identity to another. An initiation not only marks a change but is itself the means by which persons achieve their new selves: no performance, no change."  
(Schechner, 1985, p.127)

Making a transformation performance out of a transportation one is clearly not possible in a cultural context where ritual is highly specialised and specific (e.g. a Roman Catholic mass), not embedded in the everyday life of most of the population. The desire to make theatre more like ritual is partly a desire to make an expression of community, to *use* the performance to create a fellowship of audience and performers. Just as there is no single, fixed, true ritual, so there is no definitive role for an audience, spectators, onlookers. It is, however, more frequently the case in ritual than in theatre that there is an elision of spectators and performers. Ritual, at least from the perspective of Western theatre, is bound up with the concept of participation. Within this, there is a blurring, or rather a fluidity of categories and behaviours of the audience.



In Schechner's examples of initiation rites, especially among the Gahuku of New Guinea, spectators form a special category of performer whose role was integral, despite their not being themselves initiates. They acted as guides, protectors, antagonists, and/or instructors throughout the ceremony/performance. Such an audience is *integral*, they have some stake in the success or fulfilment of the ritual/performance. An *accidental* audience is there "to see the show" (Schechner, 1988 : 195).

We have seen, in the Saarbrücken memorial discussed above, that a performance can depend for its completion, its meaning (in this case commemoration) on a particular kind of participation, in this case observation based on knowledge of what is there but not visible. The audience for this ongoing performance are certainly participants in the act of memorialisation, but what they are emphatically *not* doing is "seeing the show". They do not see because the memorial is not on show, it commemorates what cannot be shown (because it has gone).

The concept of participation cannot have one clear meaning; it varies according to the nature of the performance, ritual or event associated with it. In one case, participation is simply knowing about something, in another, taking an active part in proceedings - being an 'actor', a performer. The degree of 'audience participation' can be determined by how much the audience behaves 'like' the performers; performers and audience are indistinguishable if they are doing the same thing. But what is critical goes back to De Marinis' "active or subjective sense", which concerns a *shared understanding* of the event. The participant-observers in the Gahuku rituals described by Schechner know what they must do to fulfil their role in the ceremony; it is in part why they are there.

The desire for a more actively participant audience on the part of the post-war theatre makers, particularly of the 1960s and 1970s, can be seen to reflect specific social and cultural upheavals in Europe and North America at that time<sup>12</sup>. Artistic practice of all kinds could be seen as a means of restoring connections and relationships perceived lost in a mechanised, hierarchical modern society. Some performance practitioners sought to reproduce the sense of *communitas* perceived to be present in socially effective, participatory rituals of the sort described by ethnographers (and later by performance

---

<sup>12</sup> Goldberg 1998; Crow 1996; Frascina 1999.



theorists like Schechner). Such ritualised performances also carried the promise of a breakdown in the differentiation of artist and non-artist i.e. audience, a differentiation which was itself sometimes felt to be artificial, exclusive, even elitist.

By participating, or getting the audience to participate, something over and above the creation of a theatrical work was being performed. Such performances offered a vision of transformed social and cultural relations. Herb Blau, in *The Audience* (1990) explores this phenomenon and its place in thinking about theatre and its audience in some detail in the chapter entitled 'Repression, Pain and the Participation Mystique'.

Blau takes the striking phrase 'participation mystique' from the psychoanalytically-influenced classical scholar Norman O. Brown, whose *Life Against Death* (1970 [British edition]) and later, *Love's Body* (1966), appeared to advocate a 'Dionysian-Erotic' reappropriation of the body and sensual life. In Blau's reading of Brown:

"The resurrection of the body would bring to an end all false division, the binary ruptures that produced the appearances in the contradictions of which they were made. ... In the final lifting of consciousness that is a manifestation of Eros, there was to be no distance between manifest and latent, public and private, mind and body, word and deed, speech and silence, and - in the abolition of the phallic order, with its fantasy-making apparatus - actor and audience." (Blau, 1990 : 148)

Brown's book was first published (in the United States) at the end of the 1950s, and presages the cultural movements of the following decade. Although not ostensibly about the practice of theatre - its subtitle is 'the psychoanalytical meaning of history' - its ideas draw upon the theories of the function and experience of Archaic Greek theatre, specifically the rituals of Dionysus from which it was thought to derive.<sup>13</sup> Greek tragedy, upon whose origins these theories speculate, is inseparable for us from the Aristotelian idea of 'catharsis' - the collective 'cleansing' or 'clearing' of oppressive violent emotions through witnessing the outcome of bloody acts in theatrical

---

<sup>13</sup> This thinking followed the work of the 'Cambridge Ritualists' in the early twentieth century. See Arlen, 1990 for a broad account of their writings and the ideas contained in works like Jane Ellen Harrison's seminal *Themis* of 1911. Schechner, 1988 : 1-6 contains a brief overview of these ideas and their influence. See also Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), where the idea of Dionysus, associated with the individual's destructibility and vulnerability in and to the world, is united with the Apollonian imagination to create a necessary art.



representation. This itself has a ritualistic gloss - theatre is functional, serving to cohere the social body by allowing for a 'safe', communal experience of forces which would otherwise be 'loose', uncontained and damaging in society. This is theatre as efficacious ritual, with the community as integral audience-participants.

For Blau, the 'participation mystique' is fundamentally the attempt to dissolve distance. The imagined Dionysian rites were associated with the disruption of the perceived order of things, especially the patriarchal order with its prescriptions of sexual continence, sobriety, respect for authority, the 'Name of the Father' etc. All this is bound up in the beginnings of theatre, lost to the modern stage. The whiff of pre-war primitivism inherent in this is echoed later by Artaud, seeking in Asian forms what he perceived to be lacking in the European theatre he knew:

" ... To link theatre with expressive form potential, with everything in the way of gestures, sound, colours, movement, is to return it to its original purpose, to restore it to a religious, metaphysical position, to reconcile it with the universe." (Artaud, 1993, p.51)

Compounded with a politics of counterculture which encouraged a blurring of distinctions that might lead to, or reflect, hierarchies, and a shaking-off of repressive practices surrounding the body and sexuality, different forms and degrees of participation were essayed in a variety of performance practices by, among others, The Performance Group and The Living Theater in the U.S., and Jerzy Grotowski and Théâtre du Soleil in Europe.

Even within a highly experimental context, the nature of the audience's role is dependent upon its ability, collectively and individually, to recognise and respond to at least some aspects of the performing group's agenda.

In the Performance Group's *Dionysus in '69*, as described by Richard Schechner (in Schechner, 1988 : 56-58), the audience were invited to influence the course of events in the piece and thereby to engage with it *as if* it were a ritualised enactment of a collective trauma. Within this, certain ground rules ensured that audience members intervened only in such a way that allowed for the continuation of the performance. Audience members thus intervening effectively became performer-participants of the sort that fall



into Schechner's category of *integral* audience (see above). They arrive at this status through the essentially contrived means of joining in.

A more shamanistic-ritualistic approach was adopted by the Living Theater in *Paradise Now*. Designed as a processional piece, passing through a designated number of phases in an unspecified period of time, it was open to disruption from audience members:

"*Paradise Now* is pushed and pulled this way and that, seemingly in total disarray, until you realise that the performers are like tour guides - they want to move the thing along, but only after most of the audience is ready to move on. If anyone wants to stop off here or there, to examine a detail, to "put on a show", to shout, protest, or in any way detour the performance, that is fine." (Schechner, 1988, p.53)

It is the work of the Living Theatre during this period that appears to offer the most paradigmatic versions of participation (see Tytell, 1997; Biner, 1972). Performances like *Paradise Now* were bound up with a political sensibility that sought to challenge the division of actor and spectator in theatre, as much as the perceived emptiness and lack of spiritual fulfilment to be had from traditional and mainstream cultural activities in general.

These examples are important for their apparently very literal demonstrations of audience participation, which appear to remain paradigmatic for contemporary understanding of the concept, even in an era when such events occur seldom if ever (see Section 1.3, below).

In describing performances (like those above) 'that more or less partake of the participation mystique', Blau indicates the fragility, more often the failure, of the projected dissolution, whether intended or not. Putting the audience in proximity with actors within the space of performance, allowing them to move around, change their perspective and physical distance, could serve to emphasise the very *contrivance* of participation even as it encouraged the mystique. Frequently:

"The intimacy of participation may preface or entail, however, a more radical separation; that is, interpenetration and exclusion may be played dialectically against each other, as they were in ... one of Grotowski's earliest works, where



the spectators were invited as guests to the feasting table on which *Dr. Faustus* was performed, *only to feel all the more intimately the autonomy of the performance, its devout and forbidding presence.*" (Blau, 1990, p.149. My italics)

The 'devout and forbidding presence' of performance is bound up with its relationship with the repressed, the negation that cannot be 'denegated', despite the mystique of participation with its Dionysian-Erotic pedigree:

"So, the fourth wall may be down, or up, but the mural still lingers, and it lingers from the archaic theater: *no matter what it is that we see, in great things or small, something more is being repressed.*" (ibid., p.159)

And what is repressed is what is painful. This is the range of human pain, bodily and psychic, from the blinding of Oedipus and Gloucester to the lifetime of failures, humiliations and minor disappointments endured by Vanya. Beyond this, it reaches out of the theatre and into the histories and politics these acts reflect in the real world. Beyond that, Blau speculates, into a knowledge of humanity's suffering that is archaic, prehistoric in depth, without witness, *before* witness:

"If dreams inherit the earth, the audience inherits the Imaginary, with the ancient encrustations of pain that - in the outcry of the human herd - go beyond the threatening edge, ..."  
" (ibid., p.174)

In going to the edge of what an audience can bear to see (and, included in this, Blau also talks about incompetent acting - the challenge of representation itself and whether those who undertake it are always up to it), theatre also confronts its audience with its own desire to alleviate the pain - "Or, in the spirit of amnesia, which is itself the painful affliction of a world of too much pain, to forget it." (ibid., p.182)

Even the well-documented desire of the audience to laugh, to find comedy, to encourage any perceived levity in the performance (the more grave the piece, the louder and more ready the laughter at any sign of respite), serves to expose what underpins the theatrical.

Ultimately, "... the enduring gravity of the theater is not collective but solitary. ... As Oedipus says to Theseus at the annunciation of his death:



"These things are mysteries, not to be explained;  
But you will understand when you come there  
Alone"  
(*Oedipus at Colonus* 11. 1526-28)" (ibid., p.90)

In Blau's dense, detailed, and allusive analysis, the participatory illusion is just that, a compensatory imagining of connectedness in the face of death - appallingly individual and thereby defying its manifest universality. The audience in unity exists as an idea, that which makes theatre possible by its desire for "... a potential outbreak of the repressed" (ibid., p.203); it is the individualised audience, alone in the dark, that seeks the comfort of community in which laughter is one manifestation, the 'participation mystique' another.

I have dwelt upon the idea of participation, within and without 'mystique', because of its undeniable centrality to the relationship of audience and performance. The manipulation of spatial relations, the placing of the audience, can have a profound effect upon the reception of a work (Blau's sense of its 'autonomy ... its devout and forbidding presence'). Where the audience can see itself in the space of performance, it is potentially implicated in the imaginary and actual world of the piece. A 'dramaturgy of the spectator' is created around the presence, positioning and movement of the audience *vis-à-vis* itself. The audience member who is able to see other audience members engaged in the same activity as himself can stand in, in a particular way for the absent, unrepresentable others of the performance, the silent characters, the remembered, the half-forgotten, the dead. Individual audience members may be sundered from 'participation mystique' by a certain distance-in-intimacy that binds them more closely, from moment to moment, to the separateness of the performance, its otherness. The image they make for the rest of the audience (and indeed for the performers) situates them as explicitly involved in the dynamics of the piece. A performer sitting alone on the stairs, talking on the telephone, is one kind of image; an audience member taking a seat beside her on the very same tread makes a very different one, as well as physically altering the ease of passage through the space at that moment. Such a piece of audience dramaturgy, achieved through an incongruent but strangely easy proximity to the performance's 'devout and forbidding presence', serves to highlight both the telephone's



ability to collapse space and the very experience of isolation the performer is describing. The status of such an enriched image for other audience members is that of something from within the performance that is at the same time understood to be both aleatory and dependent upon the particular set-up of the entire performer-audience relationship. It is in this sense that it becomes a form of dramaturgy.

#### **1.1.4 Implication, responsibility and Witness: audience and the formation of intimacy**

When Augusto Boal brings the small-scale social dramas of his 'Invisible Theatre' to public places, the audience is truly accidental (to use Schechner's terminology) - they are passers by, passengers on the underground, drinkers in a bar - but become integral by implication. And this is an implication that shades into responsibility - by putting a situation into an audience, Boal's political vision requires that audience to take responsibility for what they see and hear, by taking part in the impromptu debate that the action provokes, often the challenging of racist or misogynist attitudes that underpin casual social conduct in certain situations (Boal, 1992 : 6 - 16).

While overtly political work such as Boal's elides implication (by being present) into responsibility, participation and ultimately action, other formations of the political are preoccupied with the axioms of performance itself.

Forced Entertainment's 1995 piece *Speak Bitterness* took the form of a confessional tribunal, evoking ritualised, political, and highly public spectacles of the twentieth century - Stalin's show trials, the re-education sessions of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The piece also echoes theatre's own chain of responses to these, its own metahistory, in that it refers to The Wooster Group's *L.S.D. - Just the High Points*, itself an unravelling of Miller's McCarthy-era tribunal piece, *The Crucible*<sup>14</sup>. Far removed from the ostentatious privacy of the Roman Catholic confessional and its dark, whispering box of grilles and curtains, Forced Entertainment's configuration of the urge to confess comes out of the spectacularised urban landscape of Situationism (see

---

<sup>14</sup> See Auslander, 1992 for a detailed discussion of this piece as politicised postmodern performance, Savran, 1988, also discusses it. in the context of the group's body of work up to the late 1980s.



Debord, 1994; Vaneigem, 1994; Plant, 1992). It is part of a need to be noticed, recognised, included, validated, to appear on TV, to be in on the act. In a social context where identity is formed and defined through consumption, the ultimate validation is to be oneself consumed. Herein lies part of the aetiology of celebrity.

*Speak Bitterness* is performed under full house lights: the performers sit or stand behind a long table, facing the audience. The audience is as visible to the performers as the performers are to them. The text of the piece consists of a series of confessions. They vary in length, complexity, degree of improbability and seriousness. Some are not transgressions at all, or appear to be nonsensical, a palimpsest of quotations, repetitions, mishearings:

"We're guilty of attic rooms, power cuts and bombs; we confess to statues, ruins and gameboys ... We went into town and stopped dead in our tracks." (Etchells, 1999, p.186)

Adrian Heathfield, in a detailed discussion of *Speak Bitterness* in his 1997 PhD thesis, *Representation and identity in contemporary performance*, points out that the use of the first person plural in the spoken text emphasises the implication of the audience as much as their exposure under the lights (Heathfield, 1997 : 220). In addition, the tribunal-like setting suggests another kind of implication: that of facilitation. The performers discomfort, their gonorrhoeal urge to confess is *for the audience* whose presence thereby *validates* the spectacle. Between the neurotic and the totalitarian, the audience, in full view of itself, sits in guilty complicity.

Tim Etchells, artistic director of Forced Entertainment, has written of the need to create audiences for performance that are "... witnesses, rather than passive spectators." (Forced Entertainment, 2000).

Witness is something that is borne, carried. We bear witness when we affirm that something has taken place. An audience of witnesses is therefore one to which something has happened. Connotations of passivity (analogous to 'bystander' or 'passer-by' - as in punk's post-Situationist cry of "I wanna destroy the passer-by") attached to the term 'witness' are belied by the inference of potential testimony. The OED identifies the ability to testify as a key constituent of witness, and there is an attendant note of



authority in the term (OED Online Edition, 2002). The presence of witnesses transforms an action into a performance analogous to the 'efficacious ritual' discussed above.

Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in their introduction to *Performativity and Performance* (1995), highlight the importance of the concept of witness to the performance of marriage from a queer perspective:

"Compulsory witness ...[is]...not just ... the sense that you aren't allowed to absent yourself, ... [A] much fuller meaning of "witness" ... gets activated in this prototypical performative. It is the constitution of a community of witness that makes the marriage; the silence of witness (we don't speak now, we forever hold our peace) that permits it; the bare, negative, potent but undisciplinary speech act of our physical presence - maybe even *especially* the presence of those people whom the institution of marriage defines itself by excluding - that ratifies and recruits the legitimacy of its privilege." (ibid., pp.10-11)

The audience that constitutes 'a community of witness' confers a certain legitimacy on the latent content of the performance - the collective neurosis of the compulsion to confess, and the concomitant desire to hear confession in *Speak Bitterness* - as much as the fact of it as a cultural product. That silence of witness is the paradox, the lack of influence over events unfolding (hence the passivity associated with it) while at the same time ensuring their validity, their posterity in testimony.

Beyond the legal, the notion of witness has a profound association with the theological. Faith is constituted through the perceived experience, cumulative or singular (epiphanous, sudden) of the subject, and is rendered iterative, communicable, through testimony, the bearing of witness. Doubting Thomas creates and indicates a circle of witnesses in putting his hands into the wounds that are themselves witness to the resurrected body of Jesus. The role of the marginal and excluded in legitimising the testimony of privilege also features strongly (see Parker and Sedgwick above). The women who are the first witnesses to the Resurrection suffer the indignity of having their testimony disbelieved by the male disciples (this was the grounds for the inadmissibility of women as witnesses in early Medieval Irish law - despite the fact that



the women's testimony was accurate). Even here, the nature of witness, and where its effectiveness lies, remains contested, a question of whether it is essentially passive or potentially active. As we have seen, in the audience, it can go either way, or be both at once.

In Capel Pennant, Wales, at the Centre for Performance Research Points of Contact Conference: Performance, Places and Pasts in 1998, Lisa Lewis stood in the pulpit of the Nonconformist chapel where her grandfather, Lewis Lewis, had preached. She spoke of the 'Cloud of Witnesses' - essentially the ancestors - that both helped to constitute and watched over the community at worship (Lewis, 2000: 52 ). An imagined audience bears unseen witness - the performance is before an audience that includes the Dead. The audience that bears witness to itself has:

"... an intensification of that consciousness which is  
conscious of being looked at - and of *being-as-being-seen*."  
(Blau, 1990, p.184)

The audience as witness provides a sense of validation at least in part through the potential for mimesis, the reiteration of testimony. This testimony is a description, a record of the occurrence. It contains a notion of re-enactment even as its readers or interlocutors enact it again in the mind's eye (*'being-as-being-seen'*) through the medium of transmitted memory. Witness anchors performative practice in the world through a complex play of desire, ratification and marginalisation.

One of the reasons that the audience as a construct has not featured prominently in writings on performance theory is perhaps because it is so difficult to extricate it from performance in practice. From being, at the beginning of the twentieth century, an unquestioned entity, sequestered in the darkness beyond the stage lights, the audience has moved, with the performers, through the space of performance. Distinctions remain despite the best efforts of the 'participation mystique' and its exponents, but they are lightly drawn, subject to revision, provisional, mobile. In *in situ*'s practice, it is explained to the audience that they are free to move around 'inside' the performance, to see it up close, but not to join in. The intimacy of the experience is specific; it is predicated on the preservation of a certain separateness, the segregation of audience and



performers. The artist Susan Hiller has talked of intimacy as 'a blur' (Hiller, 1996: 2), as in viewing a painting up close and losing the picture but seeing the material. This is analogous to the experience of an *in situ* performance; the material resides as much in the encounter of audience and performers, its negotiated and provisional dynamic, as much as in the picture - an elusive and unsettled blur.

In moving on to the next section, where I discuss the early work of *in situ* and the development of its relationship with audiences, I wish to keep in mind the sense of the intimate blur (not least of my own closeness to the work and its audiences), and the sense of an unfinished, perhaps unfinishable, conversation. The dynamic here is between the practice itself and its description; between what happened and how that can itself be carried forward into a practice of writing about practice.

## 1.2 *in situ*: practice and the audience

*in situ* began with the idea of performance outside the theatre or black box environment; more specifically, with the idea of performance in *certain kinds* of other spaces, those that were in some way marked out, and still used, for other purposes. We were drawn to the idea of the familiar, the intimate, the relationship between performance, everyday life and individuals' idiomatic encounters with the world. Alan Read, in the introduction to his *Theatre and everyday life* (1993) explains his juxtaposition of the two titular concepts as:

"... [E]xamining both more closely reasserts the need to think not of an inside or outside of theatre but the way theatre is in dialectical relation to the quotidian. ... An evaluation of performance and the quotidian takes as its object the neglected and the undocumented..." (ibid., p.2)

'The neglected and undocumented' is often the most familiar; that with which we are intimate. Our vision is blurred by too much seeing, too much of certain kinds of knowledge, certain kinds of assumptions. While it was Brecht who developed the theatrical practice of *Verfremdung* (estrangement) to counter both the complacency engendered by such familiarity and the potential for sentimentality (Willett, 1964),



Viktor Shklovsky, writing out of Russian Formalism, postulated that to make [something familiar] seem strange (*ostranie*) is a fundamental of all artistic practice:

"The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception ... Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important." (Victor Shklovsky quoted in Déak, 1976, p.85)

*in situ*: turned first to the domestic, the paradigm of intimate space, and of the familiar, to begin a project of uncovering the performative capabilities of the house.

Theatre, for much of its later history, has flirted with an idea of intimacy that is bound up with the privacy of the domestic. It is part of theatrical naturalism's project to make us believe that life is taking place before us. To this end, theatre has made a facsimile of the domestic that acts as shorthand for 'house', even for 'home', but it is necessarily evacuated, full not of the accretions of everyday life but of 'props'. It is as if theatrical practice cannot sustain the tension inherent in making the *material world of the private* so publicly intelligible.

*in situ*: began by wondering about this dual familiarity of domestic space in theatre and in everyday life, and reached, almost immediately, the *making strange* that performance in a real, lived-in, house would entail. In choosing a space through which everyday life is mediated, *in situ*: places performers and audience in an environment whose psychic territory is not the preserve of one or other (there is no backstage area where the audience are not admitted, for example. There can be no mutually exclusive perspectives - stage to auditorium, auditorium to stage.) To perform in a house is to make work that is primarily concerned with the nature of the audience's encounter with it.

The nature of the company's concerns in terms of thematics appeared to be better served by a complex, multiple space made up of discrete units than by a single, unitary performance arena. Exploring the elusive, the uncompletable, struggles of the imagination, the attempt to do justice to the complexity of things seemed compatible



with this space that can shift between comforting and unsettling.

In teaching and teaching-within-performance practice it is vital to approach such material with *not just one kind of performer*. Performers putting themselves into space are engaged in an interrogation of the nature of performance *for them*. The specificity of their bodies, time, knowledge, desires and limitations forms the crux of the exchange between site, material and audience that coalesces into performance.

Finally, this opening out into multiple spaces and perspectives is reflected in the use of diverse textual material, either found, produced in the rehearsal process, derived from the performers' own experience and/or expertise, or from a variety of sources - literature, drama, film, historiography, objects, gestures, memorates (this is a term used by social history and folklore researchers, among others, for accounts of remembered personal experience - see, for example Bennett, 1987), dreams. In the course of a performance, the single, central proposition, which usually gives the piece its title, does not and cannot remain the privileged focus of activity. It is rather illuminated, obscured, contested, revised, reflected, speculated upon and contemplated by performers in the act of discovering what kind of performance it can make.

*in situ*.'s first house performance did not begin with Ibsen or Chekhov or any of the key playtexts of naturalism, but went to the imaginary landscape of Dante's *Inferno*. The eternal and the familiar map onto each other in certain ways, primarily through repetition, in conventional theatre, the device that perfects the illusion, but more likely to be treated as *prima materia* in contemporary performance practice.

The repetition inherent in the private Hell of endless housework referred back to memories of one of the performers' mothers invoking 'Dante's *Inferno*' to describe the constant clearing up in a house with small children.

*Inferno* was developed with a group of seven performers - four women and three men - and a director, in the Spring of 1998. The performance space was a large, first floor, corner flat, the director's actual residence. The flat was above a car showroom. It was arranged in an L-shape around an entrance lobby with skylights, itself at the top of a flight of stairs. Passage windows in the flat looked out onto this space; outer windows



faced onto the two streets that formed the corner. The plan of the flat centred on a very large living room with two doors, leading to two passages at right angles, off which the other rooms were arranged. At the top of the stairs, and to the right, was the front door of another flat. As far as was known, this neighbouring flat was unoccupied. Along from this were the windows of the passage leading to the dining room and kitchen, and the front door, which was glazed. Straight ahead were the windows of the passage leading to the bathroom and two bedrooms (one very large, the other very small and only occupied by the director's six-year-old daughter on her fortnightly weekend visits). The flat was furnished normally, with the exception of the large living room. This contained only a television and four white rectangular boxes (dimensions 150cm x 75cm x 30cm approx.). The boxes had holes for handling at either end and were inverted for use as seating and tables. (Their original use was as 'coffins' and stage daïses in an expressionistically-designed adaptation of *Dracula* - in a studio space) The height of the space was low enough for the tallest performer (Tim Waterfield, 192cm) easily to place a hand flat on the ceiling as if holding it up.

Work centred on the dual phenomena of the textual content and the space. Performers began with their own relationship to the spaces of the flat and its contents, *inflected* with their knowledge of the content and context of *Inferno*. Working with the notion of 'Hell' - torment, punishment, eternity - universalising concepts redolent with the complexes of theology and philosophy, and culture-bound, it seemed possible only to aim for equivalence and metonymy out of the smallness of our own experiences. Dante's Hell, the flaming pit visible to the right (the left hand of God is in fact stage left in the theatrically-reversed perspective of the pre-Reformation congregation/audience) in representations of the Last Judgement (sometimes called 'Doom' paintings), is a place of *bodily* torment. In representation, the body must stand in for the soul, how else to picture pain, but through the only locus of sensation?

Material for individual performances therefore began with bodies in and through a particular space, configuring the images contained in the text through the specific readings of the domestic brought to bear by each performer. In other words, they sought the 'hellish' within a bodily encounter with the flat itself.



But this encounter is not theirs alone. In Dante's *Inferno* there is a guide; the performance is mediated, explained, justified, even at times censored. *in situ*'s performers in *Inferno* developed their personae, not as tormented souls/bodies, but as guides to the flat. Like Virgil leading Dante, they have the task of leading the audience around, showing them the flat. This returns us to the presence of the audience (if we ever left it), the need to supply reassurance/guidance at the entrance to the performance-world, at the same time as we are brought again to 'making strange'.

The four performers' guiding moved between saying 'this is an ordinary flat, look at the ordinariness' and 'something is happening here that you can see but which I can't *show* you'. From the outset, we worked with an audience, but an *imagined audience*, not physically present. Guiding is an everyday activity, even a job. The task in hand is based upon a transfer of knowledge, of perception, of translating the visible world into meanings, histories, contexts. As an encounter, it at once contains, evokes and nourishes its Other in an essentially benign exchange of attention for information and/or interpretation. To act as a guide is to imagine oneself as another, to *make another of oneself* by first of all thinking about the act of communication - translating what one knows into something intelligible to someone other than oneself. Because performance is fundamentally a use of the self, as an artistic practice that puts something out into the world, it has this 'othering' at its core. John Freeman describes the process:

"A number of decisions made during the 'making process' are arrived at out of a state which can be recognized as alternating between self and other. This refers to that state whereby the 'self' of the creator is tempered on occasions by the 'other' of the spectators-to-be." (Freeman, 2002, p.97)

Performance's first audience is always already the self as other.

The act of guiding is aimed at the disorientated, the curious, the open audience, and soothes with its communicative presence. This is the task undertaken by the performers, to make the audience feel at home. But there being nothing special about the flat (it isn't even for sale; it is already rented, already occupied), the guiding reflects the guides, concentrating on the banal, the excruciatingly detailed; everything is made new, 'made strange'.



*A man, having opened the front door, stops to explain the mechanism of the Yale lock, demonstrating how it opens, closes, can be left on the latch.*

*A woman describes the arrangement of crockery on the shelves inside a kitchen cupboard, explaining that items are easier to stack if plates and dishes (for example) are kept in separate piles.*

*Another woman looks in the bathroom mirror, pointing out how in the mirror image everything is reversed. She says that the way we are used to seeing ourselves in the mirror is not how others see us, because it's the 'wrong way round'.*

*Another man opens the airing cupboard and gives a detailed description of how the central heating system operates.*

The imaginary audience, like the real one that is to come, may or may not know these things, may or may not have articulated thoughts about them. By looking so closely at where they are, the guides bring their audience into the space, reassuring them that what they see are the same things - the same door, the same cupboard, the same mirror. And yet ... In the detailed specifics, the idiosyncratic, the obvious, there is something not quite right. It is oppressive; there is too much information. The guides are looking, the audience is looking; but although they are in the same place, they are, in some fundamental way, *not in the same place*, or at least not in the same place in the same way.

It is only out of such reassurance that what is unsettling about what is happening, indeed that *a performance* is happening, can emerge. The guides only share knowledge of what is self-evident, what is demonstrable (perhaps only to locksmiths and heating engineers, but concretely demonstrable nevertheless). What is outside the concrete and material, that place that they are in but the audience are not, is the concealed object of



performance. The process of making the performance becomes one of how the performers manage the transition, through leakage, exposure and rupture, from 'care of the audience' to independence of them, the latter now acclimatized and able to 'look into' the performance - the reversed world of the mirror, the Doom painting.

*In the small bedroom, the lock man begins to discuss the room in terms of the danger of being cornered in it and having no way out.*

*Looking into the mirror, the woman touches her reflection slowly, falls into a rigid 'pose' like a photo in a magazine, stops speaking, as if in a trance, 'leaves' the audience.*

*The heating man reads out a headline from a right-wing newspaper and heaves a great sigh, interrupting his own train of thought.*

*In the large bedroom, the crockery woman puts on a CD of bland 1980s pop, and begins to dance, touching her body, as if she is alone.*

As the guides repeat their tours of the flat, the ruptures and disturbances become more marked, and begin to dominate their discourse. The repetitious nature of the guiding becomes something that covers the repetition of compulsion, obsession, entrapment by which it is gradually overcome. The task of guiding, and the comfort-in-authority of the role of the guide, is craved by the flat's inhabitants, and they seek to hold onto it in the presence of the audience even as it is eroded and the 'infernal' nature of the environment is revealed. The escalation is emphasised and precipitated by the activities of two performers whose direct interaction with the audience is minimal.

The first of these emerges from a glass-fronted wardrobe with movements that are at first so slow as to be barely discernible: during the course of the piece she follows a



trajectory through the various spaces of the flat, staying in each for a specific length of time (averaging about ten minutes, but varying enormously depending upon the intensity of the activity undertaken). Hers is an entirely physical performance, connecting the suffering of Dante's bodies with her own - she shivers with cold, gnaws at raw grapefruit (Ugolino's hunger - the skulls of his children), slaps herself as if tormented by insects. The *Inferno* of Dante is mapped onto the flat through her presence. The guiding personae are disrupted where- and whenever they encounter this, being compelled to follow the actions, still trying to retain the audience's attention.

The translated text of *Inferno* resides with only one performer, another woman moving through the flat without direct reference to the audience. 'Invisible' to the other performers (in the sense that she exerts no discernible power over them, does not alter their behaviour), she mimics their postures and those of the broken and mutilated dolls that accumulate in the space during the course of the piece. Holding still poses she recites fragments of Dante's narrative (in English). She exudes an impotent sympathy for the suffering 'guides'.

These two performances were developed through *in situ*.'s understanding of the 'choreographic theatre' techniques of Enrique Pardo (Pardo, 1998 and Pardo, 2003). Having trained with Pardo in various workshops in Cambridge and Paris from 1996 onwards, the group had incorporated adapted techniques into its own rehearsal process. Most important of these was 'leader-follower' work, in which one or more individuals supplies movement, gesture and mood while other members of the group follow them, doing what they do - 'stealing their spirit'. Followers may change leader during the course of the exercise, giving rise to groupings of images (for example, five people lying on the ground, moving only their toes, and another two, close together, creeping around as if in darkness; or one person frantically twitching and jerking on the spot, with six people on all fours, slowly crossing the space like a herd of ruminants). After a while, this gives rise to an imaginal landscape into which text may be incorporated. Pardo describes it thus:

"... choreography elaborates a 'con-text', a place, a landscape of relations and moves, a physical dramaturgy that can withstand the impact of 'text', ..." (Pardo, 1998, p.20)



*In the bedroom, the woman who crawled out of the cupboard is moving agitatedly. It is as if she cannot bear to be still or to touch the ground for more than a moment. She moves her head as though she is trying to shake something out of it.*

*The movement is compulsive and convulsive.*

*The lock man comes into the room holding the plastic leg of a large doll. He is immediately 'caught up in' the woman's movements, jerking and gyrating, struggling to continue with what he was doing. The crockery woman enters; she too becomes subject to the violent, spasmodic movements, and she too attempts to 'carry on'. She tries to talk about what she likes to do on her own, listen to music, read a sexy novel.*

*Her voice is disrupted, breathless, panicked.*

This is consistent (and in *in situ*:'s version, remains so) with Pardo's idea of the imagination, for him the world of 'emotion' (see Pardo 1998 and 2003 for elaborations of his use of this term), coming in from the outside, 'descending' like the power of a god. This removes from performers the responsibility of drawing relationships between texts, inner worlds and their own intellectual formulations. In Pardo's choreographic theatre the meaning of the text, its 'con-text', comes from outside the speaker/actor, who is within the landscape of that text, not the other way round.

In developing *Inferno*, Dante's images of corporeal torment were used as the basis for the physical dramaturgy, thereby imposing a highly specific landscape upon the performers and space within the flat. The silent performer served as leader, interposing Pardo's exercise into the body of a performance. In working without reference to the audience, this role became a means of drawing the performers *away from the audience, and away from concern with it* into the autonomous world of the performance from which the audience is ultimately excluded.



This removal is reinforced by the presence of a roving cameraman who films fragmented episodes, collected as he, like the audience, follows performers around the flat. Some minutes later, he plays back what he has filmed on a TV monitor in the living room. This material could contain sequences which are still going on, or which finished some time before being shown - another intimation of eternity through repetition.

The structure of *Inferno* was a simple one of introduction-disruption-escalation-crescendo, with the final section leaving performers incapable of offering anything but their suffering to the audience - at this point the director leads the audience out of the flat and down into the street. Looking up at the windows, they see the tormented occupants clamouring inarticulately for their attention.

With a trajectory to run, instead of specific scenes or discrete episodes of any kind, rehearsals consisted of running the piece from beginning to end with the director moving around as would an audience member. Images, incidents, events, accidents, encounters and juxtapositions are noticed, to be commented upon and discussed afterwards. Individual performances are thus built from a basis of task-oriented work (showing the audience around, being compelled to do, or being obsessed with, certain things, following the leader when she appears) and contain strong elements of contingency (being caught by the leader's movements, having to share a space with another performer, being locked out of the bathroom). Attention was paid to how the piece would be viewed - through doors and windows, in mirrors, from one end of a corridor or another - accident and serendipity, what one might come across as a audience member.

The imagined audience, the spectators-to-be, were looked after, acclimatized, and then left to witness the performance collapsing entropically into an autonomy that necessarily excluded them, even in their intimate proximity to it.

When the real audience was admitted, however, it became clear that this proximity was problematic in ways that had not been anticipated. Having discovered (or rather, entered a process of discovery of) a practice that included an audience, the fact remained that an audience of others (i.e. non-performers) themselves had yet to discover a



complementary practice, and the early performances of *Inferno* provided something of a testing ground for a dramaturgy of the audience (see above).

Performances of *Inferno* were not advertised to the general public: the audience was recruited in the main from the company's past and current students, some of whom were experienced performers in earlier, studio-based, ensemble pieces (one of these pieces was concurrently in rehearsal as *Inferno* was developed and performed). Other audience members were individuals known to the performers and director and invited by them. By way of introduction to the piece, the director informed them that the performance took place all over the flat, that several things would be happening at once, and that they were free to move around as they wished. Information was kept to this minimum as we felt that the audience would need permission to step outside the more traditionally passive role assigned to it.

While some audience members chose to stay in one place for stretches of time during the performance, this was seen by them as a choice to experience the piece in a certain way - i.e. waiting for the performance 'to come to them' - and therefore an experimental inversion of moving around the space oneself, seeking out the performance.

The first five performances exposed the company to a range of audience behaviour that had simply not been foreseen. In short, the real audience was much less well-behaved than the spectators-to-be.

Experience of the playful, improvisatory context of the teaching workshops caused a few individuals to behave as though the performance were a sort of 'theatre game' in which they were required to somehow take part. This taking part took the form of attempts to discover who the 'characters' were, the nature of their relationship to each other and the space, and 'the story'. This was done by a combination of direct questioning of actors and voiced speculation with other audience members, often in the presence of performers.

Performers were instructed not to respond to questioning; in the light of this, questioners (for the most part) re-read the situation and did not persist. The questions, however, belonged to a different world, a different order from the one inhabited by the



performers. As such they had the effect of draining the specific imaginative energy from the environment, as if they had been conscious attempts to flatten it out. Questions like: "Is that your sister?", "How long have you lived here?" and "What's your name?" seemed to spring from the paradigm of role-play games, specifically dinner party murder mysteries wherein guests are assigned characters in the set-up and must question each other in character in order to discover the identity of the murderer. For a few audience members, this desire to join in took the form of playing a familiar, or at least recognisable, kind of game, the entering of a parallel reality that obeys strict general rules (usually held in common with literary/dramatic fiction) and whose detailed workings are there to be uncovered, understood and mastered by adherence to an investigative strategy.

Physical interventions were also made by one or two individuals during the first set of performances. In some cases, performers' particular use of fixtures and fittings was taken as an invitation to intervene. Such interventions usually had a preventive aim - turning off taps that appeared to have been left running, switching off lights or music - although in one case a performer's presence inside the glass-fronted cupboard appeared to provoke a desire to assist their emergence from it; on at least two occasions an audience member opened the catch, allowing the door to swing slightly open.

As with the questioning, this behaviour served to disrupt the image-making work of the performance as it had been made hitherto (in the presence of spectators-to-be rather than a live audience). Relations of space, time and atmosphere were collapsed into an almost competitive encounter of desired realities, frustrated intentions (of the performers) and lost clarity (of the performance as we had been making it).

More extreme forms of audience behaviour became apparent in the later performances of the first week. Even more surprising to us than the questioning and interruption that characterised investigative joining in was a case of 'audience performance'. In this an individual treated the performer's behaviour as an invitation to make psychiatric diagnoses, even to the point of discussing with another spectator what should be prescribed. Later, the cameraman's attempts to film the performers attracted his attention and he began to interpose his own performance between the performers and



the filming, at one point discoursing straight to camera on the weaving of Persian rugs. Again, this person's performance was not prevented or checked in any way, either by performers, director or fellow audience members.

In an isolated and extreme case, an audience member manhandled performers, attempting to prevent them from engaging in the more disturbed behaviour (submersion in the bath, clinging to the mirror surface, twitching movements, crying) that characterised the later stages of the performance. At no point did any performer pulled about in this way cease performing to tell the person clearly to stop and that what she was doing was inappropriate. This physical disruption, with its inherent and actual violence, was in fact ended by the director speaking to the person. Nevertheless, the person in question continued to comment loudly upon the actions of the performers, like the audience-performance of the psychiatrist a couple of evenings earlier - almost as if the performers were not live, present and real *other people*. This violent physicality was by far the most extreme and discomfiting episode of audience intervention, with the subsequent running commentary remaining problematic for other audience members as well as performers.

When we made *Inferno* in the flat, in the absent presence of our imagined audience, a part of that role was carried by the director, a privileged spectator, an insider and, to a varying extent (from performer to performer), an instigator. We had not realised where the lines could lie, what constituted the boundaries of our performances, the space of its autonomy, until they were crossed. The audience, not given any prohibitions, were in a sense not given a purpose, a role, and thus appeared to be seeking their place in this newly-configured world. With permission to choose their perspective and proximity, to *move around inside* the performance as bodies in space, did this perhaps not seem like a move into hyper-realism, a theatrical equivalent of painting to look like photography, where the embodiment, the Barthesian *grain* of painting - brushstrokes, liquidity, impasto - is absented, hidden, unmarked?

Although performing in the flat had allowed us to work within an audience-performer relationship that was more dynamic and flexible even than promenade, we had envisaged this solely in terms of the audience having a different, more intimate,



perspective. Unlike the Living's *Paradise Now*, *Inferno* had not been created with an acknowledged possibility of an audience stopping or effacing the performance, effectively replacing performers, who would be obstructed from following their planned and habitual trajectories through the piece by audience activity. Insofar as there was any envisioning of how the relationship might be altered by allowing the audience free movement throughout the performance, this has not encompassed any imagining of their desire to participate, and that the freedom offered to them might constitute an invitation to do so. Our conception of a uniformly hesitant audience, in need of encouragement and permission, had been disrupted. Our imagined audience had, unsurprisingly in retrospect, not behaved as if they knew the things we knew when we imagined them going round the flat. They called our bluff, they saw something we hadn't been able to see - the apparent freedom constituting an invitation to join in. They recognised they were part of the show, but not in the way we thought they would. It made us think about what we were doing, and what we wanted to offer the audience, now we no longer had to imagine them as being what we would be, were we our own audience. We had to recognise that what we wished to offer was an experience of a performance, devised, rehearsed and modified to something resembling readiness, if not completion, that *retained a practice of distance* that was nevertheless not defined through *spatial demarcation, physical separation*.

We set out guidelines for subsequent performances. The audience were asked not to talk to the performers, or to each other, and not to tamper with any fixtures or fittings (particularly lights, taps and electrical appliances). It was emphasised that their participation was not and would not be required - no-one would ask them to perform, despite sharing the space with performers. This seemed to provide necessary reassurance, as well as clarifying the audience's role *vis-à-vis* the performance/performers. It became possible for the performers to move in and out of the world of the performance as required by the performance structure and process, a structure and process that we found we had always intended to be important, if not central, to their, and the audience's, experience.

The response of later audiences, in what was essentially the second set of performances,



was reportedly more focused upon the nature of the piece itself as they perceived it. The experience of being in a domestic space instead of a theatre, and of being in close proximity to performers, having to move out of the way, following individuals, overhearing others, brushing past, being shut in with them opened up ways of perceiving and discussing performance that audience members had not hitherto accessed. Several individuals told us that their own experience of the piece was highlighted, often in terms of what they had seen, where they had been alone or with others, specific encounters with performers, their own confusion, apprehension, even embarrassment. Some described their strategies of engagement; these varied from waiting in one room for a stretch of time to allow the performance 'to come to them', to following only a specific performer and witnessing their tasks, encounters and disintegration, or following the majority of spectators to be at a perceived or somehow 'recognised' focus of attention.

*The mirror woman goes into the bathroom, where a hot bath is being run. A couple of audience members follow her in. She bolts the door behind them, turns off the taps and begins to undress. She is talking to them about the importance of pampering and feminine details in a bathroom. Standing in her slip, she appears to lose sight of them, stops speaking altogether. She turns and looks at herself in the steamed-up mirror. Still in her slip, she slowly gets into the bath, as if in a trance. She submerges herself, letting her face go under the water. Her long hair floats around her.*

Reflecting upon, and writing about, the reception of *Inferno* allows me to put myself in the place of the audience we had, as opposed to those we imagined we might have (during the rehearsal period). I have imagined the experience from this perspective to be one of gradually being withdrawn from, of being left to my own devices.

In the second half of the piece, and particularly towards its ending - a crescendo on



which the audience were led out of the flat and down into the street where they were able to look up at the performers gesturing ('through the flames', as it were) at the windows, unable to escape - the performance had become more autonomous. This is to say that the performers were no longer engaged in any attempt to communicate directly with audience. The aim was to convey a sense of their having retreated into private hells, the repeated, compulsive and distressed behaviours that signalled not only *their* separation from the outside world, but that of the performance itself. As this performed retreat became more apparent, some members of the audience reported feeling assailed by the unassuaged nature of the performers' apparent suffering, as unable to escape from it as the denizens of Inferno itself. More importantly, their proximity to the representation of such torment emphasised their powerlessness, their inability to ameliorate or end it. With no recourse to communication by word or touch, some spectators experienced sensations of being trapped and tormented themselves. The lack of comfort and communicated reassurance left them prey to feelings of resentment at their helplessness; at one performance a number of audience members sat out in the living room and attempted to ignore the performers around them. The audience's awareness that the suffering is only a representation, is staged, and therefore not open to the effects of any real compassion or empathy evoked in them, was reported by some as contributory to feelings of annoyance and frustration. For others, the experience was more one of abandonment and disorientation. One audience member memorably described her experience of the *audience* as 'left feeling like motherless children'.

Reactions such as this, although by no means the norm, helped us towards re-imagining the experience of the audience in terms of its encounter with an *emotional scale* of performance that could be appropriate to a domestic space.

In retrospect, we realised that the shift from a reassuring and acclimatising mode, geared towards familiarising an audience with an unusual and intimate performance space, to intense displays of confusion, despair and psychic disintegration, close up and with no dropping of character, constituted an expansion of dramatic scale. The earlier emphasis on the domestic, the features of the flat through the eyes of its occupants, had given way to an imaginative landscape that was gargantuan, distant, epic and overlaid with a



weighty mantle of cultural reference. The performance's attempt to match this landscape with an equivalent psychic-emotional one, by acting, effectively shut out the audience at a point where they had little choice but to stay within its bounds. Again they were somehow deprived of a role, this time through the mechanism of witness becoming an abstracted presence of extreme passivity.

*Members of the audience turn to look up from the street at the windows of the flat. Above the partially-lit car showroom, the square windows are bright, but darkened by the faces and hands of the newspaper man, the crockery woman, the mirror woman, the lock man. Their faces are pressed up against the glass, distorted. The palms of their hands are flattened, white. They are crying and calling, silently.*

The continuation of work in a domestic context would clearly entail some renegotiation of what was possible and necessary to convey emotional and psychic states. The space of performance and the acts of communication it held appeared to be in part constituted by the intimate, the private and implied rather than by the more grandiose codifications of the theatrical.

When work resumed, it was in a small three-bedroomed house. This space is on two floors and has a distinct outside in the form of its small back garden, side passage, and front overlooking a communal green area. Downstairs accommodation consists of a hallway with lavatory/cloakroom and stairs off, and an open L-shaped area comprising kitchen, dining area and living room. Upstairs is a landing, three bedrooms and a bathroom. There is another landing halfway up the stairs, with a window overlooking adjacent allotment gardens. This house has become the permanent base of *in situ*: and the environment for all house performances after *Inferno*.



*Transmissions* was developed in the house from September 1999 to March 2000. A work-in-progress performance took place in December 1999, and there were some changes of personnel after this point. For our purposes, only the final version of the piece is discussed. Seven performers took part, one of whom (Pete Arnold) had performed in *Inferno*. Rather than beginning with a known text and its world, the group began by exploring questions of the performers' identity in the context of the house - in part a response to the discomfiting and unanticipated audience questions of *Inferno*. The premise of not knowing, not remembering, began to coalesce. Performers improvised around themes of lost and fragmented memories, of emotions cathected by fragments and residues, the elusive and partially constituted minutiae of everyday life and its detritus. The trivial and the banal asserted themselves as loci of a struggle to realise identities that seemed to have emerged too faint, like poorly-developed photographs.

Short texts were produced, by writing or from remembered fragments of existing texts, already 'out there'. These were for the most part dialogues, or *de facto* monologues with one or more interlocutor. They took the form of scenes from various genres of television with which the participants were familiar - a 'community' soap opera (a scene from *EastEnders* reconstructed from memory), a hospital drama (a brief pastiche), a science fiction series (an actual scene from an episode of *Blake's Seven*, memorised from a script posted on the internet by science fiction fans), a historical drama (another, densely-worded and highly literary, pastiche), a crime/detective drama (a pastiched/imagined fragment of *The Sweeney*), a children's programme (a reconstructed incident from *Teletubbies* involving the loss and recovery of a handbag), an American cartoon (of the more postmodern variety, crudely drawn and with scatological humour, fairly easily pastiched). The scripted fragments varied in complexity, although all took between one and four minutes to perform. They were staged with specific settings (rooms or areas in the house that 'contained' them) and/or objects.

Scenes took place by request - a performer's need or desire to act it out - or by accident, that is performers finding themselves in the scene by environment, ambience, physical positioning, or by suggestion in the form of a significant word or phrase of the script



from another context.

*A performer stands in front of the closed door to the downstairs toilet and calls to another performer upstairs, who comes running. Together, they shoulder the door open. A third performer is inside; who appears to be unconscious, collapsing onto the floor. The first performer says: "Bloody hell, it's Fat Len. What a mess."*

*In the bedroom, a woman protests her innocence while a stern and authoritative man accuses her of an adulterous relationship with a third party, whose 'sybaritic indulgences' are apparently well documented. She throws herself on the bed, weeping.*

The rehearsal process aimed at producing an effective 'accident machine', by which performers move around the space, following a trajectory of their own concerns and tasks, but subject to being pulled into the scenes as a means of relating directly to other performers, of making relationships with them. As in *Inferno*, most performers addressed audience members directly, often expressing their bewilderment and sense of strangeness in the world in which they found themselves. Their only interaction with each other was through these scenes, which they could utilise to form and prosecute relationships.

The action was sporadically interrupted by 'seminars'. These were gatherings of all the inhabitants to hear the findings of the Researcher, whose primary task was to look up words from the scenes in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, seek (perceived) references to them in books selected at random, and piece together meanings, stories and spurious definitions from these activities. This information was always received with joy and excitement by the inhabitants, as if it was news from long-lost loved ones,



a breakthrough of some sort. 'Seminars', however, always ended in disruption, misunderstanding and chaotic dispersal, as the promise of enlightenment escalated into a hysteria of suggestibility, seemingly innocuous words triggering orgies of scene-playing all around the house.

*The Researcher comes downstairs with a disorderly pile of books, some open, some bristling with markers, and a sheaf of notes. Performers are gathered around the table; they look excited, they are fidgety and restless. The researcher reads out a passage from a biography of Kenneth Tynan. Some of the listeners try to make notes. He comes to a phrase about a handbag. Two of the performers immediately seize upon the word 'bag' and begin repeating it in high-pitched, 'baby' voices. They rush upstairs, followed by others, all saying "bag, ba-ag". The seminar is disrupted and the Researcher gathers up his books and notes.*

Upstairs, a television in the bedroom was set to static when switched on, incapable of transmitting anything but hissing white noise and 'snowstorm'. This was imagined as the origin of the scenes, a performer being drawn to it like an oracle and 'receiving' a new script from it, speaking it like an oracular mouthpiece, written down by a waiting scribe. The inhabitants were then seen attempting to learn it, perform it, find the staging of it, in short, create a scene from it.

This process, taking place in an imaginary world that is nevertheless mapped onto a real and concrete space which is not disguised as anything but itself, becomes a meditation on the status of performance and the nature of performatised selves and identities in their relationship to memory. Tim Etchells says "I don't believe there is anything authentic in what I write or how I speak, and whenever I speak or whatever I write, it's really a collection of different voices speaking ... you quote unconsciously or not from



other voices ... Other voices speak through you. You use them, they speak through you." (Tushingham, 1996: 52). This is borne out in the work of Etchells' company, Forced Entertainment, not only in their use of language (writing and speaking that eschews striving for originality and authenticity in favour of a poetics of re-cycling) but in the object-world of their performances. A netherworld of nightclubs, discos and theatres *after closing time*, pantomime costumes, outmoded technology (in particular the mono record player), second-hand clothes, this is an aesthetic of re-use that relishes the struggle of the contemporary imagination to (re-)construct meanings and identities from the detritus of urban, post-industrial culture. Even if modern life is rubbish, it nevertheless provides the only material available for the making and re-making of selves and relationships.

*In a closed upstairs room, a man is shown film of himself  
recounting a folktale about a boy who was fostered by trolls  
and forgot his real human family. As he watches, he  
struggles to recognise himself, to remember the story. He  
wonders if he and 'Troll-Lafi' are the same person.*

This notion of unformed and uncompletable selves, constantly in flux and made and re-made out of encounters with others in a world where *all* objects are of potential value drew *Transmissions* into a different relationship with time from that expressed in *Inferno*. In the latter, repetition, disintegration and withdrawal from direct communication were employed to access an imagining of eternity in broadly phenomenological terms (that is, by way of lived experience - like the depiction of the soul as a body - rather than through higher mathematics and theoretical physics). By removing the audience from a peopled environment that had changed, in its presence, from one to which it was integral to one oblivious to it, the piece is suspended in the moment of the audience's exit. At this point, the fictional world of the performance (such as it is) is reconfigured as a necessarily doomed attempt on the part of the flat's inhabitants to obscure the nature of their existence as souls in eternal torment. As such,



the 'work' of the performance is to highlight the redundancy of the audience's potential empathy, involvement or witness.

*A woman explains that objects and photographs that seem familiar to her keep appearing from nowhere. She tells the audience they might be 'clues', but she has no way of unlocking them. She thinks one of the pictures might be of a character in one of the scenes, or her own grandfather. She doesn't know.*

*A man who has just performed a scene about space travel is perplexed by his knowledge that teleportation is impossible. He tries to explain Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle to the audience in a quiet corner. He seems unsettled by his desire to perform the science fiction scene.*

In *Transmissions*, the audience enters a performance that appears to have begun in their absence and will apparently continue without them. While admitting of change and progress, it nevertheless contains digressions, failures, confusions, obfuscations and abandonments; in other words, a slow process that is not discernible in its particulars. The company decided that the best way to give a sense of the performance's autonomy, a close-up of its necessary detail, was to extend its length beyond the expected duration of such a piece. It was decided to run the piece for six hours in a final performance for an audience. This was deemed long enough for performers to develop relationships with each other and with the material that make up what Forced Entertainment have referred to as the 'live dynamics' of the piece - "... play, competition, upstaging, duress, exhaustion, pattern-making and alliance-forming." (Forced Entertainment, 2000). Closely associated with a task-based approach to performance, whereby: "The journey which the public follows is that of the performers as they make their way through the



task or project of the piece." (ibid.), the visibility of live dynamics, like the visibility of the performance's tasks themselves, becomes a point of conscious or unconscious access for the audience. *in situ*:'s audience, in sharing the space with performers, free to move around in more or less the same way as them, is also subject to the piece's 'play, competition, upstaging, duress, exhaustion, pattern-making and alliance-forming'. The *in situ* performance, in its intimate proximity, becomes an active collaboration in the use of space, attentiveness, response and awareness. Here, bodies are in motion, actively making the space of performance.

Within this practice, both audience and performers are also able to vary the intensity of their engagement with the work at any given time, even taking time out within the space, perhaps alongside co-performers or other audience members who were still fully 'on'. This is a form of the selective inattention that is frequently associated with durational events ranging from certain religious ceremonies to cricket matches.

The audience for *Transmissions*, which was performed just once<sup>15</sup>, was divided between those who arrived either at the beginning or later and left before the end, and those who arrived at the beginning and stayed until the end. About twenty-five people attended over the course of the day, of whom about five formed the latter group. Drawing upon the experience of *Inferno*, all of them were instructed in our newly-formulated ground rules of house performance, themselves something of an imposition and requiring some effort over the full six-hour period.

Audience members in post-show discussion expressed a sense of having 'been through' something, of having had an experience or set of experiences, rather than having 'seen something'. These experiences were bound up with 'live dynamics', with individuals citing pattern-making and/or pattern-observing, sympathizing with certain performers and feeling annoyed with others, sharing frustrations expressed by performers to them, and being bewildered and moved by the same stimuli along with performers.

---

<sup>15</sup> As the cast of *Transmissions* was made up of non-professional performers, all of whom earned their living in full-time day jobs unrelated to performance, the usual run of such a piece would have been rather short -a maximum of five or six nights. As a six-hour-long performance could only reasonably be compassed at a weekend, this necessarily limited the number of performances. To perform on two consecutive days was felt to be too exhausting, and, unfortunately, all cast members were not available for two consecutive weekends. With restricted time in which any performances could take place, this resulted in *Transmissions* being a one-off performance.



It seemed to me that being given the time as well as the space to move around within the piece, but with certain conditions that differentiated them from the performers, had here helped audience members create an experience of a performance that did not contain the usual engines of plot and character, at least not in stable forms. The six-hour duration did not culminate in any kind of crescendo or disintegration, as *Inferno* had done, and I think that the absence of such devices contributed to audience members' stated sense of being allowed in to work out the piece alongside its performers. This experiment with duration served to introduce an alternative to an emotionally-charged dramatic structure that is dependent on performance practices that at best need to be heavily modified, interrogated, or called into question in the intimate environment of house performance.

*Transmissions* saw the use of performers' lived experience, knowledge, sensibilities and expertise as part of the fabric of the performance. This, coupled with the overt investigation into, and contemplation of, the processes of memory in the formation of identities, paved the way for a set of practices and themes that seemed to integrate themselves with the house environment and could be revisited and built upon in subsequent work. Our discovery of these practices and processes also included the audience, emphasising their work as holders and recognisers of each performer's actions.

### **1.3 Practice and its analogues: theory performed.**

In this section I will make some observations on the relationship between the ideas discussed in Section 1.1 and *in situ*:'s practice, with reference to the two early pieces described in Section 1.2. This is only in a very loose sense a reflection on the porous nature of the interface of writing-about and practice in performance. It more closely resembles an examination of an aspect of the creative process over time, how *practices* are formed, nourished, and come to resonate with one another.

Reflecting upon the material in the first section in the light of *in situ*:'s practice as described in the second, I am struck by the elusiveness of what is called 'theory' in the context of performance. 'Performance theory' is endlessly diverted into, and deferred by,



practice. It is at once concealed, reflected and superseded in the act of performance itself. It becomes itself a way of practising - it is theory that lives through what is done. Its relationship to the abstract is somehow untenable, always resolving into practice to articulate itself, to *presence* itself.

For this reason, performances are rarely if ever made to test theories. They are instead haunted by them, or embedded in them, or refracted through them. Having ideas (theories) about the audience is inseparable from imagining what the audience *is*, presencing it within the creative context. In *in situ*'s practice, this has always been a case of 'who is with me here?', someone outside myself that experiences me. The audience, like theory itself, begins in the space between self-experience and imagining an other.

The 'ideal reader' of Reader Response Theory can only be mapped onto an equivalent 'ideal audience member' in the presence of specific desired readings of the performance. In this respect, such an individual is simply a facsimile of the practitioner, their response drawn from the same well of knowledge, desires, experiences and neuroses, the same complex of identity-forming phenomena. This is effectively a duplication of the self-as-other role in the process of making performance. It cannot ever be imagined in terms of singular positions or perspectives, nor of having an 'artistic object' carried in the imagination for comparison with what unfolds in the performance. The self-as-other is a product of the shifting identities produced in and through the practice of performance, as such it is unsettled, undirected and indistinct, incapable of being mapped onto ideal or definitive versions.

While it is certainly true that the presence of a real audience in some way completes the work, this completion must always be one of deferral and dispersal, rather than a closing of some circle of understanding and mutual recognition. In this sense the audience's work is closer to collaboration. The making of such works exposes the separate and uncontrollable nature of response, of what the experience of art begets in its audience. There are as many 'artistic objects' (in Mukarovsky's phrase) as there are audience members.

The experience of the audience is, like the Sign itself, doubly articulated, in the sense



that it is each spectator's own encounter with the piece as well as the performers' encounter with the audience-in-the-present (rather than the audience-to-be, the imagined audience or the audience of self-as-other). From this perspective, it is essential that part of the work of the piece is *not* to elicit particular responses from its audience. The moment of encounter with the audience/'responders' is where the performance is opened out into its dialogue with others; it thereby resists being matched against an ideal interpretation, reader or spectator. This represents a kind of inversion of Reader Response Theory's notion of the role of the recipient of a work. Here the performance-makers discover the piece by performing it for an audience, whose participation is constituted in its present and subsequent use of it in emotional and intellectual life.

In part this participation is, as we have seen, engendered by proximity, the sharing of space. The bodily experience of performers and audience are rendered equivalent, at least from moment to moment. As we have seen, understandings and interpretations of the participatory experience in Western performance practices are varied and historically situated. Blau's 'participation mystique' has its origins in a socio-cultural complex that centres around the realising of a (perceived lost, suppressed or distorted) connection between individuals at a personal level, heralding a return to awareness of the connectedness of all. In pieces like Schechner's *Dionysus in 69* and the Living's *Paradise Now*, shared space and/or permeable performer/audience boundaries were augmented by direct appeals to audience members to take part, to produce action intended to be watched by others as part of the performance. Frequently the explicit purpose of such invitations was the dissolution (or at least destabilisation) of the distinction between artist and 'non-artist', between producer and consumer, between those qualified to speak and those disqualified.

Such a perceived blurring of roles is only possible within an essentially authoritarian reading of the structural components of specific performance practices based upon the theatrical model. Such readings characterise performers as active and spectators as necessarily passive, with the former often seen to be acting and speaking to or even in place of the latter. It is this position that can slip into notions of hierarchy and structures of domination and oppression, whereby one group (performers) is privileged over



another (audience), in this case, specifically in access to self-expression, creativity, and self-identification. In this critique, art, specifically theatre/performance, reflects society's propensity for division, demarcation, separation and alienation, and these tendencies are carried in and reflected by its *structures* of hierarchy and authority.

Philip Auslander notes that in Stanislavsky's, Brecht's and Grotowski's differing visions of performance the *presence* of the actor (variously emotional, intellectual and physical) relies upon an absolute, consistent and inherently stable performing self that denies play, disruption and disappearance (Auslander, 1997: 28-38).

It is through such presence that charisma and its authority are transmitted. Auslander thus locates the political not in structure (and structural oppositions of the performer:audience = active:passive kind) but in the act of performance itself. The shifting, destabilised identities, found texts and repetitions of postmodern approaches to performance undermine the authority of the performance itself and thus the inherent privileging of its encounter with the world over that of its audience. To this end, many performance companies retain the separation of performer and audience by working with end-on staging, a practice that Schechner has described as an abandonment of the political (Schechner, 1982).

In *in situ*'s practice, the proximity of audience and performers is combined with postmodern techniques of shifting identities, 'Not-Acting' (see Kirby, 1972) and repetition. The effect is not to disrupt a perceived hierarchy of actor and spectator but rather to emphasise the de-privileging of a single perspective or reading of a piece. The separation is retained through the use of instructions for the audience; these instructions maintain certain crucial aspects of distance and differentiation between performers and audience that allow the performance to take place.

Without these instructions, in the early performances of *Inferno*, it can be said that some audience members fell into a kind of participation mystique, mistaking the lack of spatial differentiation for an invitation to take part that, unlike *Dionysus in 69* and *Paradise Now*, was never extended. It is a *kind of* participation mystique in that only insofar as these audience members were able to influence and affect the course or appearance of the piece could they be a part of it. The lack of information supplied to



them about the nature of their role as audience in this unfamiliar form of performance caused them to use other models to make sense of the experience. Treating it as a mystery to be unravelled or as a gameshow version of anthropological fieldwork (only a matter of time) represents one type of model. The other appears to be a vision derived from an understanding of radical performances of the 1960s and 1970s era and an attendant notion of audience participation associated with them. This is despite the fact that such performances in Britain were unusual even at the time and far from widespread, taking place for the most part in the capital. The actual audiences at early *in situ*: performances were for the most part too young to have attended such events, or remembered them had they done so. In fact, to the company's knowledge, only one audience member, a practising artist, had experienced any such performance. This was the legendary 18-hour piece, *The Warp*, which took place in London in 1976, and she reported that her confusion at what was expected of her led to her behaving in a way that she later regarded as destructive, or at least detrimental to what was on offer, in a similar way to our own perception of the behaviour of *in situ*:’s early audiences<sup>16</sup>.

Interestingly, when questioning members of *in situ*: about the nature of *Inferno*, *Transmissions*, and subsequent performances, potential audience members often cited an anxiety about 'audience participation'. This is not as understood by practices of pantomime, much children's theatre and the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (of the "Look behind you!" or even the water-squirting, rice-throwing, dressing-up variety) but as something specifically associated with a shadowy, rumoured and much-derided (in Britain) 'avant-garde' or 'experimental theatre'. They seemed to fear that they would be made to join in, to become performers, or become like them, and that this coercion would of course not be on their terms. This opens out into what is almost an area of folk belief about performances that involve enforced participation, leading to humiliation and exposure.

I include this in my discussion because of what it might cause us to reflect upon when thinking about *in situ*:’s early, pre-guidance, audience behaviour. In the anxiety about what an imagined participation might entail, there lies a question about what exactly it is the audience, before they enter the performance space, thinks the performers are doing.

---

<sup>16</sup> Elspeth Owen, *pers. comm.*, April 2000.



What does the audience see as being exposed, put at risk, by the performers, that they themselves are anxious about exposing? Is this the audience's view of the space that lies between it and the performers? In a recent analysis of phenomena that disrupt the presumed intentions of theatrical practice, Nicholas Ridout identifies audience embarrassment as being bound up with what he calls "an investment in the pleasures of the more conventional modern theatre" (Ridout, 2006: 77). This in turn is derived from the fragile ecology of a theatre that appears to depend upon an asymmetry of relationship, of disclosure and consumption that is,

"...the act of self-revelation that is psychological acting, while the spectator is permitted to enjoy the feeling of intimacy that comes from witnessing acts of self-revelation in others, without disclosing anything of herself, safe in the darkness of her seat." (ibid., p.77)

Even without psychological acting, a performer submits herself to the gaze of others, gives an audience permission to look (or stare), to listen (or eavesdrop), to have private thoughts, opinions, even make judgements about her. She allows herself to become an object for others, as she has become one for herself in the performance process. To perform is to risk the loss of the power to identify oneself; new performance practice plays with and emphasises this when it persistently exposes the absence of a unitary, stable self. This returns us to Blau's 'repressed' - the underlay of theatre whose surfacing is both feared and desired. It is in this act of *being an audience* - of playing subject to an object that is shifting and unstable - that individual spectators confront their own fear of what it means to perform, to exist for and through others. The oft-quoted fear of audience participation makes more sense in these terms; the acknowledgement that the manipulation and reading of our identity is not solely our own prerogative is an unsettling and intimate one.

The mingling of audience and performers within the physical space of an *in situ*: performance can bring about a visual confusion of the two. If there are no obvious costumes, it can be hard to tell who is performing and who is watching, and this is often remarked upon by audiences after performances. The audience begins to see itself, its horror of performing (of 'being-for-others'), but also their desire to do (to be) so.



This self-watching by the audience creates the 'dramaturgy of the spectator' in a literal sense. Images are formed by audience members as they move through the performance. They are making scenes for both performers and fellow spectators in a chain of watching, of object-making. This is an audience participation by presence, where the formation of attention is visibly evidenced by the actions of spectators. It is witness in the active sense, allied to choice and to the potential for testimony. Acts of choice are central to this sense of presence. In *in situ*'s work, audience members can withdraw from something they find difficult - too much suffering, incompetence and failure, boredom. The structure of both *Inferno* and *Transmissions* allowed for a gradual acclimatization to the space and proximity of performance. During the course of each piece, audiences undergo a passage from strangeness to a sort of familiarity (or the beginnings of it) through their own pathways and negotiations with the material. This can be thought of as a formation of intimacy in the suspension of social inhibitions surrounding looking, listening, the space of others. Blau's observation about proximity leading not to a merging, an *identification* with the performance, but rather to an acute awareness of its otherness, its 'devout and forbidding presence' is relevant here. The audience too makes an other of itself, reiterating the process of performance-making that was conducted in its absence, in the presence of the audience-to-be. Over time, a decision to withdraw from a scene, from a presence, becomes *marked*, observable: "I choose this. I choose to leave this."

Seen in this way, witness takes on the character of a type of awareness, a form of consciousness in which the identities of observer and observed are in constant conversation, acts of exchange, of trying on for size. In this sense, intimacy is as much a play of differences and separating out as of recognition and identification.

In proximity, performers are revealed (exposed?) as ordinary people. They are alongside their audience, they perform often in its absence, they are audience for each other, by accident, by default, by proximity. To someone entering the space for the first time, it is rarely clear who is performing, who is audience. Sometimes the roles appear interchangeable; watching an audience member reacting, not reacting, framed in light or blinking in the shadows creates context for another.



Being physically close to a performer, being alone with them, or leaving them alone, to do all these things is to offer something to others in the space, the atmosphere you make, the attention you give, the space where you once were.

### **Concluding remarks: the theorised audience and the practising audience.**

We have seen how imaginings and conceptualizations of the roles and relations of the audience has informed the making of performance in the post-war period, thereby creating an 'ancestry' of ideas and practices for contemporary work. The relationship of theory to practice in performance is always under scrutiny; the former folds into the latter, a practice itself. Taking Goat Island's self-descriptive statement "We have discovered a performance by making it"<sup>17</sup>, it is now more appropriate to say that we discover theory by practising it.

The early experience of *in situ*: seems to show that ideas of audience, and expectations of it and its behaviour, have informed and influenced audiences as much as, if not more than, they have practitioners. The residue of notions of participation, merging, the blurring of boundaries, the breaking down of barriers and the crumbling of hierarchies can still be felt wherever audiences need reassurance that they will not be coerced into joining in, or humiliated, or exposed. It was necessary to reassert, and, almost in passing, *redefine*, the idea of distance in order to allow *in situ*: audiences to experience the performances as autonomous and separate phenomena, subject to, but not dependent upon, their involvement and engagement.

Audience experience and behaviour can nevertheless tell us something about what it is performers are doing *for the audience*. In *in situ*: 's work, performers have no absolute and authoritative presence, and are in extreme proximity to the audience, sharing the space with it. From this a play of negotiations is made, involving witness, identity, recognition and separation. The communication between audience and performers is in these intimate and provisional languages. Karen Christopher of Goat Island points to a vital collaborative element that mirrors the process of collaboration in performance-

---

<sup>17</sup>[www.goatlandperformancecompany.com](http://www.goatlandperformancecompany.com) [Accessed June 2005].



making:

"Because of what led to this moment, what came after, each person's reference points, and my own intentions and those of Goat Island, the moment does not look the same to everyone. It is not as simple as a magician pulling a coin out of a person's ear, but it is no less a collaboration between the performer and the spectator. *The moment occurs with the involvement of all parties.*" (Goat Island, 1996, p.9. Italics mine.)

How these collaborations are negotiated, formed and dissolved, has strong affinities with the play of memory and desire that psychoanalysis characterises as Transference. In the next chapter I will explore, through a detailed discussion of *in situ*:'s piece *Father, can't you see I'm burning...*, how the reading of psychoanalytic practice informs the company's work.



## Chapter Two

### Memory, Material and the Dead: Objects and Self-States

*'Father, can't you see I'm burning...' was the first performance made under the name of in situ:. It was also the first performance made without the participation of a larger group and, as a chamber piece with just three performers, therefore afforded what seems to me still to be a much closer and more immediate connection between working process (the events of thinking, devising, trying things out) and the performance as it was presented. Our circumstances, with two members including myself, engaged in full-time work not related to performance, meant that working time was restricted to intensive weekends. Any time in between would be taken up with preparing things for presentation to the others, and later with making refinements.*

*As it turned out, a substantial proportion of the performance material was derived from my own experience, including aspects of my family history and material derived from my associations and re-workings of it. Consequently, even now I feel I know this piece best, am more bound into it, have the closest connection to it. For me, 'Father...' is cohesive, has a sharp outline, is accessible in its detail to my attempts to remember it. I also situate 'Father...' at something like the beginning of my bringing together of my long-standing interest in psychoanalysis with my work in performance. I approached psychoanalysis as a practice, something that was predicated upon what happened between two people in a room, thinking together in specific ways, or rather using specific ideas to think with. Encountering the work of Christopher Bollas and the field of Object Relations, I found a resonance with my active interest in archaeology - what I found so fascinating about the capacity of material, things, to carry meaning. This meant that for me, psychoanalysis could be situated in a nexus of inter- and intra-personal relationships and connections to material that seemed to replicate the processes of the performance practice upon which I had embarked.*

*In this chapter I have drawn together my thoughts on the relationship between performance and psychoanalysis as practices. Through writing, my thinking coalesced primarily around the Transference-Countertransference as a way of understanding the possibility of unconscious transactions, relations and associations contained within the audience-performer relationship, and around the idea of the material objects as active in self-formation, triangulating the individual's inner world with the worlds of others and the world of things. Secondary to this is a consideration of the role of space, specifically domestic space, the site of four out of the five in situ: performances discussed in this thesis (including 'Father...'), and its capacity to become 'place' for us, that is, to become familiar. Through this, it carries the potential for the Uncanny (the familiar - but repressed because forbidden, unsettling - made strange). Performing bodies in domestic space thus are doubly charged with the Uncanny, being in two places at once (the real house, and the imagined place of the performance, even if that is another house), and as bodies that may be multiply occupied with competing or co-existing selves, personae, self-states.*



*The work of memory is central to performance, as it is to the project of psychoanalysis. In a sense, both are engaged with the retrieval of past events, an encounter with what is lost. For both, this is not an unproblematic reconstruction or re-enactment, the work is enmeshed in a complex interplay of past and present that itself constitutes their respective practices.*

*In psychoanalysis, the past that is subject to retrieval through memory is acknowledged not to be a record of events (even subjectively experienced events), but the past reformulated by the subject in the present (see below for a discussion of Freud's concept of 'screen memories'). It can be the retrieval of what is not necessarily perceived as lost, or even perceived at all until attended to by a psychoanalytic process whose role it is to observe phenomena felt in the present, the structures and strategies of which were formed in the (often pre-verbal) past. Memory in psychoanalysis can therefore be seen as a form of performance, in that it is primarily through the body and bodily-emotional sensations of the analysand (and analyst - see the discussion of countertransference below) that the past is presented and re-presented.*

*Performance, as 'twice-performed behaviour' (Schechner, 1988), is at least partly dependent upon memory. It is made through the presence of bodies in space and it is through the body, as in psychoanalysis, that memory becomes material. Human bodies and the objects they make and use can become interchangeable within the symbolic economies of both performance and the formation of the psyche, and memory is the chief mechanism through which this is brought about. For the individual performer, her collaborators/fellow performers and audience, the encounter of the body with space and things sponsors individual experiences that are brought into relationship with, and eventually reinscribed through, memory. In this way, the material(ising) of memory itself becomes a site of performance.*

*In writing this chapter, I have remembered the events around performing and creating 'Father, can't you see I'm burning...' at a distance of between two and seven years. I have attempted to give as accurate an account as I can, talking with Richard Spaul, who also devised and performed the piece, to corroborate, refute or modify my memories. As I write, details re-emerge, or I become aware that they are scant. I confound one set of performances with another, or one individual performance with another. I have to settle for a somewhat impressionistic account that is built from my own subjective experience of the piece as a performer, in performance. I have had to remember myself remembering - not only what I had to do to make the performance happen (go downstairs for this passage, retrieve a box from this place, and so on), but the work of retrieving the personal memories I was using within the piece for each performance. Often, these were the same stories, almost certainly I would be drawing on the memory of the telling of those stories on previous nights, so the performance was working through me to make its own memory of itself.*

*Sometimes I would retrieve a new memory, perhaps in response to slightly different performance conditions. One night, an audience member brought his dog along and left it outside, where it quietly sat on the patio for the duration of the performance. I pulled back the dining room curtains to reveal some photographs of an archaeological site dug by my father in the 1950s, and saw the dog dozing outside the window. This prompted me to recall my father telling me about a dog they referred to as 'the foreman', who watched them as they scraped and brushed and measured. I*



*incorporated this into that night's performance.*

*For the audience, memory work is primarily activated through the relation of time and space as the performance moves around the house. In every return to a room, doorway, stair, there is a reminder of what went on there minutes, or an hour, before. The performance configures its own map of remembered incidents and associations for the audience members within the compass of its own duration.*

*Audience memory also operates through personal association, whence images and performance events derive much of their effectiveness and resonance for individuals.*

*After one of the early showings of 'Father...', a woman sat on our sofa and cried.*

*Although not distressed by the performance itself, one scene, where Richard appears to be drunk and collapses on the floor, had caused her to revisit a phase in her life where she had been living with an alcoholic. The performance had caused her to see her past self and situation and feel compassion, as if that too had been a (particularly moving) part of the performance. For her, some of this memory-material from her own life would be re-incorporated into her memory of the performance she had just seen. This, of course, is an experience very close to my own, as the remembering of my own past becomes bound into my memory of performing 'Father,...'. When, to write this, I reconfigure that memory, the other acts of remembering are incorporated into it. As I write, there are fragments both of the performance, and of the remembered stories it involved, being constantly reconfigured.*

*The material of the performance is memory, and the act of remembering. If I am talking about my own father, audience members may be prompted to think of theirs, even if this seems to resist what they believe to be the intention of the work - one man said to me at the end of a performance, "I couldn't relate to that at all. It wasn't anything like my background. My father was nothing like that." His belief was that the intention behind the inclusion of apparently autobiographical material was to prompt the audience to recognition and identification of shared experiences, and that this had not been possible for him. Yet, to make such a comparison, the performance must have caused him to remember or reflect on aspects of his own past, as I (as the performer) was doing with mine. This can be seen as a form of mimetic engagement, on the part of the audience member, with the work of the performer, and such a reaction seems to me to be more likely where audience and performers are moving freely around a shared space, in close proximity. Performance becomes a way in which personal (rather than collective) remembering can be configured as an interpersonal, or even social, practice. For me, this is part of its affinity with psychoanalysis, and why 'Father,...' is the in situ: piece where this affinity is most evident.*



## Introduction

Some of the connections between psychoanalysis and performance have recently been explored, most notably in Patrick Campbell and Adrian Kear's collection, *Psychoanalysis and Performance* (2001). Papers in this volume centre upon important phenomena such as the parallels between repetition and rehearsal (Baraitser and Bayly, 2001) and the ways in which unconscious formations can be realised as images outside language (Fischer, 2001). Within the scope of this chapter, and indeed the thesis overall, my concerns lie with the affinities of *practice* within the performer-audience and the psychoanalytic relationship, as well as with psychoanalytic understandings of the ways in which identity- and self-formation processes are specifically performative.

This chapter focuses on *in situ:*'s performance piece, *Father, can't you see I'm burning...*, made in the house from September 1999 and first performed in April 2000. It was performed again in August 2000, and had three final showings in March 2001. The piece brought together a number of the company's preoccupations to date, in particular the presence of the dead in everyday psychic and physical life, the idea of possession - the haunting of one person's body by another -, and the capacity of objects to cathect memory and emotion.

*Father, can't you see I'm burning...* was the first performance made by *in situ:* that did not involve performers who had graduated from the company's teaching programme. This meant that it was necessarily small-scale; there were three performers in the final production, Pete Arnold, Richard Spaul and myself, under the direction of Martin Dixon. In terms of practice, the creation of the piece also represented something of a departure into unknown territory. Without a nominated director, and without an originary text to provide a framework, we could only start by seeking ways in. We wanted to make a piece about our relationship with the dead, specifically the desire to make contact across the divide of life and death, and its apparent counter-desire, to keep the two realms separate, to reduce the influence of the dead upon the living. We began with a question:

*If we call up the Dead, who will answer?*



This seemed to bring us to a kind of beginning, a place where voices could be heard. It also seemed to address something of the play of terror and desire associated with the peculiar presence of the dead. The dream discussed by Freud in Chapter Seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1976) is one of an encounter with the recently-dead, and is suffused with desire, rather than disturbance. This too seemed to provide another sort of starting-point:

"A father had been watching beside his child's sick-bed for days and night on end. After the child had died, he went into the next room to lie down, but left the door open so that he could see from his bedroom into the room in which his child's body was laid out, with tall candles standing round it. An old man had been engaged to keep watch over it, and sat beside the body murmuring prayers. After a few hours' sleep, the father had a dream that *his child was standing beside his bed, caught him by the arm and whispered to him reproachfully: 'Father, can't you see I'm burning?'* He woke up, noticed a bright glare of light from the next room, hurried into it and found the old watchman had dropped off to sleep and that the wrappings and one of the arms of his beloved child's dead body had been burned by the lighted candle that had fallen on them." (ibid., p.652. The emphasis is Freud's.)

Freud interprets this dream as wish-fulfilment, the bringing back to life of the dead:

"The dead child behaved in the dream like a living one: he himself warned his father, came to his bed, and caught him by the arm ... For the sake of the fulfilment of this wish the father prolonged his sleep by one moment. The dream was preferred to a waking reflection because it was able to show the child once more alive. If the father had woken up first and then made the inference that led him to go into the next room, he would, as it were, have shortened the child's life by that moment of time." (ibid., p.653)

This interpretation situates the dreamworld of the Unconscious and its processes as the locus of creative possibility - in the dream, the imagination, the making of art, the world can be shaped according to our desire, or what we think is our desire.

Lacan, characteristically, places the significance of the dream not with presence (as if living, of the dead child), but with an absence, that of what he calls 'the encounter':



"Is not the dream essentially, one might say, an act of homage to the missed reality - the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening? ... Thus the encounter, forever missed, has occurred between dream and awakening, between the person who is still asleep and whose dream we will not know and the person who has dreamt merely in order not to wake up. ... It is only in the dream that this truly unique encounter can occur. Only a rite, an endlessly repeated act, can commemorate this not very memorable encounter -..."(Lacan, 1994, pp.58-9)

As performers struggling with our own desires and missed encounters, using the dream allowed us to move between the identities of the mourner and the mourned. The making an other of oneself, discussed in Chapter One above, raised another unanswerable question: *Who are we for the dead?* The repetition, the ritualisation that enacts the 'missed encounter' causes the performance to coalesce and dissolve by turns around it. In taking the work's title from one of the Ur-texts of psychoanalysis we sought to acknowledge only the pervasiveness of its discourse in our work, seeking at most a sort of dialogue; not making a representation after the event (the missed encounter again?), it became possible to reflect upon the work 'in proximity' (see Goulish, 2000a) to my own reading of particular psychoanalytic concepts and their affinity with *in situ*.'s practice.

In this chapter, *in situ*.'s performance piece, *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* (2000-01, hereafter abbreviated as *Father...*), is discussed within this 'proximity'. As 'proximity' describes a space around something, it is itself a fitting concept. *in situ*.'s house performance is enmeshed with the formation of intimacy, connectedness and separation, and I have been drawn to aspects of psychoanalytic practice that particularly foreground these concerns. The branch of psychoanalysis known as Object Relations offers insights into the formation and constitution of the capacity for relationship with the external world and with others. Together with the central concepts of Transference and Countertransference, phenomena that are produced by the specific relational context of the psychoanalytic encounter itself, I have found this approach invaluable in thinking about performance practice.



Beginning with an overall description of the development and performance of *Father...*, I will discuss certain aspects of the piece with reference to these concepts. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that contemporary performance's exploration of the social and psychic processes of identity formation, re-formation, transformation and dispersal has close affinities with the project, and indeed the experience, of psychoanalysis. In reading psychoanalysis as performance, and *vice versa*, it is my intention to show that the essential proximity of audience and performance in *in situ*'s site-specific work engages with the experience of intimacy, connectedness and separation, within and outside the self, to provide us with an understanding of the way in which performance makes and uses relationship to form itself.

Moving from the specifics of *Father...* and its themes of death, the Freudian Uncanny and the 'haunted' self, I hope to bring the performance into a dialogue with these key concepts of psychoanalytic practice.

The phenomenon of Transference coalesces, *as performance*, one of the central questions of the psychoanalytic relationship: "*Who is speaking to whom?*". The analysand (the term usually used in clinical writings for the person undergoing psychoanalysis) responds to the analyst using a repertoire of dynamics and habits that were constituted by, and within, relationships in their past, with parents, carers, siblings and the like. Together, the analytic couple can use these responses to understand the inner life of the analysand in their relation to others in the present. The contemporary understanding of the Countertransference has shifted beyond Freud's equivalent of Transference, but from the analyst's end, mitigated by the latter's specialist insight. It is now often thought of as an experience of a direct, wordless, communication from the analysand in the form of a feeling or state of being that is, literally 'transferred' to the analyst and experienced directly by him or her (see Bollas, 1987 and 1989, or Lomas, 1994). This aspect of communication of self-states is particularly interesting from the perspective of performance practice. A performance that is not predicated upon the concealment of complex or transitory/transitional emotional or self-experiences (unlike psychological or naturalistic acting), is able to exploit the presence of unconscious dynamics. Transference and Countertransference are part of the 'live dynamics' of what



happens in the presence of others. The way in which *in situ*:'s house performance practices sponsor particular ways of being-in-performance for performers is explored in Chapter Three.

Winnicott's theory of Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena (Winnicott, 1971) coalesces the experience of learning to manage separation and intimacy through the use of sensory objects, often actual material objects, to represent a particular psychic state. This groundbreaking work has been built upon in recent years by, among others, the American-born British psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas, in a series of books exploring identity-formation through the material and cultural world (Bollas, 1987; 1989; 1992). I discuss both in relation to *Father...* in order to demonstrate the way in which *in situ*:'s particular site-specific practice exposes performance's reliance upon the negotiation of relationship between audience and practitioner within an embodied experience of space and materiality. This is further developed through a dialogue with the ideas and practices of archaeology in Chapter Five.

I conclude with some remarks about performance as an experiential practice which, like psychoanalysis, is not a representation of life, but a reflective and collaborative discourse through which it can be lived.

### **2.1.1 *Father, can't you see I'm burning...: a performance from memory***

Tracing a work back to some sort of beginning is notoriously difficult; the work itself, the work of art, is often a kind of unravelling or untangling of desires, preoccupations, diversions and reconsiderations. As such it can seem to clarify and pare down, condensing - through refinement, transformation and, most importantly, response - a mass of heterogeneous material into something more or less coherent within itself.

Perhaps this can be compared to what archaeologists call 'structured deposition', specific material put down in a certain way, with intent, with what we might call reason. Seen this way, the work-behind-the-work is the performance's memory of itself. There is, however, always other material: parapraxes, displacements, misplacements, forgotten things, things 'outside practice'. The unconscious of the performance. As I write from



memory, the memory of thinking the work out, of 'discovering a performance by making it', both sorts of material are deposited on the page, as it becomes itself the site of performance.

We began by thinking about calling up the dead. Looking at an account of a piece by Susan Hiller (*Élan*, 1981-82, see Einzig, 1996), we came across the experiments conducted by the Latvian psychologist Constantin Raudive in the 1960s. Amplifying, slowing down, and playing back the silences recorded on reel-to-reel tapes in empty rooms and on unused radio wavebands, he believed he could hear the voices of the dead. Speaking in strange, staccato rhythms, and in a jumbled multilingual argot of English, German, Latvian, Swedish and Russian, 'they' described the place where they were, asked after the living, or, chillingly, seemed forever caught in the moment of their demise ("No head, no head, no head, no head...". Raudive, 1971: 162). We wondered what it would sound like; would we 'hear' the voices too? We tried making our own approximations, using a cassette tape recorder; one tape was labelled 'Car Crashes'. We unsettled ourselves; on the A14 every day, it felt like a rehearsal.

We thought about the need to find voices in silence, using the resisting of one kind of negative to resist another, to resist all negatives. The idea that somewhere there exists, in whatever form, a record of everything, that a sound once made continues to travel forever, the idea that nothing (and no-one) is lost.

We listened to each other naming and describing all the people we knew personally who had died, imagining all relationships as somehow ending up as relationships with death. The traditional songs where the stranger with whom you fall into conversation turns out to be Death:

"As I walked out one day, one day  
I met an aged man all by the way  
His head was bald, his beard was grey  
His clothing made of the cold earth and clay  
His clothing made of the cold earth and clay"  
(*Death and the Lady*, traditional, arranged and recorded by  
Waterson:Carthy, 2002)

We thought about the difference between talking with the dead and Raudive's strange



eavesdropping on them. For us, the dynamic of terror and desire seemed to inhere in the play of this unsayable moment, the point of the knowledge of death, and all the accumulated knowledge of the lost life, of what is 'taken to the grave'.

We had started with just two of us, and we found ourselves exchanging solos without being able to open them out. We asked Martin Dixon, a composer, to join us. At first we had an idea that he would help us with some sort of soundtrack or soundscape for the piece, but a more urgent need was for someone to be 'outside' our work, and to reflect upon it with us - to direct, in fact. The two of us began again, this time with short prepared individual presentations, with Martin and the other one as audience. It seemed that we were both seeking ways of expressing a relationship with the dead as one of distance, something general and universal and part of the 'outside world' (the throng, the multitude, the Majority - Dante's wonder at so many having been undone) but also of intimacy, a private experience of self and personal relationship.

He imagined the photographs in newspapers coming to life, coming through the walls.

I made a scrapbook of absent pictures, famous images of world events intercut with images from a person's life at the time. They were just squares drawn in pencil with the descriptions written inside them: 'A man in a commando uniform standing to attention, but in a garden, with a white wooden dovecote in the background', 'A man writing on a piece of paper at a desk on the deck of a ship', 'A naked little girl running towards the camera with her mouth open, screaming' etc. etc.

He lay in the bed motionless, his head covered, and intoned accusations: "You never come to see me" "You talk behind my back" "You take what you can get from me" etc etc.

I sat blindfolded and pretended to tell them their future by 'reading' a metal nail file I held in my hands.

Images were beginning to coalesce when we took a long break, and moved into the house. When we resumed I re-presented some of the material in the form of object installations. I tried reading a poem (Auden's *Musée des Beaux Arts*<sup>18</sup>, which refers to

---

<sup>18</sup> Auden, 1979, pp.79-80.



Brueghel's rustically imagined Fall of Icarus, the main subject, the great drama, just a distant splash with tiny kicking human legs; part of the background to everyday life) and an account of a woman's personal memorial for her dead sister (an extract from Marilyn Partington's essay on her relationship with her sister Lucy, missing for twenty years and subsequently discovered to have been one of Fred West's victims<sup>19</sup>. She described a private 'ceremony' where she places flowers among Lucy's bones, a process through which they are reclaimed, as the remains of a re-membered and loved individual, from publicised horror and forensic investigation). It seemed that these text-based, almost scripted interventions 'closed off' the images, leaving them stranded on restricted islands of interpretative ground. They were somehow co-opted, requisitioned, something too specific to be put into the service of something else, whose connection to them remained only distant, tenuous, vague.

I looked again at the material I had been using, what I knew personally of one death, my father's, and what remained of the life that preceded it, his life. We approached something akin to archaeology, a ground where the knowledge and memories of the living encounter the material remains of a life now 'in the past' - letters, medical reports, objects, clothes, names and places. We recognised that, although some kind of work could be made from this alone, it would be an *assemblage*, a collection of material given up to interpretation. To come to the work like this would make us biographers, sleuths, gossiping around an illusory final picture. Falsifying the evidence to bring a completion that Death itself never permits.

*I am awake in the middle of the night. It must be very early morning, pre-dawn. I know this because everyone is in bed, even my father, who is always up until at least 1 or 2am. He is almost 65. He has angina. I know this because it has just been diagnosed. It is very common, and manageable. He has no history of heart trouble. I am crying and unable to stop. I imagine that he will die imminently, possibly even immediately. There is no time to ask him everything I want to know. There isn't even time to think of the questions. I am crying about never knowing, about all the lost knowing. I look at my face in the bathroom mirror and think (perhaps I even whisper it to myself), "This is the face of someone whose father has died".*

---

<sup>19</sup> This appeared in the *Weekend* supplement of *The Guardian* newspaper in the Spring of 1995.



In our own house we are doubly marked - as performers who live there, and as participants in a performance happening there. As an environment for new performance, or what Philip Auslander calls 'postmodern performance' (see Auslander, 1992 and 1997), that is performance that at once acknowledges and interrogates its own subjecthood, the house bears a complex and shifting burden of both mimetic signification and evasive otherness.

In the house, with the weight and shape and mechanics of human bodies so readily discernible in its fabric, the notion of theatrical gesture is exposed as an awkward resistance to the actual environment. The house is so much itself that to seek to superimpose another landscape onto it creates a self-evident and almost extreme reflexivity of practice. It literally cannot bear any 'device'.

On the other hand, domestic spaces, real and imagined, can always double for one another (for a discussion of the ways in which dreamt, imagined and physical houses are interlinked, see Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, 1994) in other houses of the same broad type. It is also important to note that houses in some non-Western and non-industrial cultures and societies have space organised differently; discrete rooms, for example, might be replaced by areas dedicated to specific activities, or notions of individual and group privacy are differently configured. See Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995.

### **2.1.2 A mapping of the performance**

*This is a description of the action of Father... written as if I were on the outside, and able to be in more than one place at once. I am of course able to do this because I know what was happening, what was available, in rooms I wasn't in at any given time. For this reason, the description cannot be said to be from the perspective of an audience member at a single performance. Although I have written this account of the action of the performance in the third person, 'the woman' referred to is of course myself. This adds another peculiarity to the perspective, in that the impressions given are what I thought I was doing or conveying, my intentions, in a sense. They are not*



*necessarily what someone else, an audience member, would see in my performance. Possibly they are not what I would see, were I able to watch my own performance in the present. In short, this account of Father... is subjective; although the nominal perspective is from the outside, it is also from the inside.*

In *Father...*, a man and a woman inhabit a house. He is downstairs, reading in an armchair. He shows the book to the audience, describes it, reads a passage from it. It is an old paperback edition of Ian Fleming's *Live and Let Die* (1957), a famous spy thriller set in the Caribbean. It is 'trash', but a classic of sorts; it is also of its time - it was written in 1954 - people wear different clothes, use different names for things and places. The 'real world' origin of its fantasy has itself become an unreachable and imagined past, the world reconfiguring after the Second World War. The hero is flying over the Caribbean, in a tropical storm, thinking about death:

*"No, when the stresses are too great for the tired metal, when the ground mechanic who checks the de-icing equipment is crossed in love and skimps his job, way back in London, Idlewild, Gander, Montreal; when those or many things happen, then the little warm room with propellers in front falls straight down out of the sky into the sea or on to the land, heavier than air, fallible, vain. And the forty little heavier-than-air people, fallible within the plane's fallibility, vain within its larger vanity, fall down with it and make little holes in the land or little splashes in the sea. Which is anyway their destiny, so why worry? You are linked to the ground mechanic's careless fingers in Nassau just as you are linked to the weak head of the little man in the family saloon who mistakes the red light for the green and meets you head-on, for the first and last time as you are motoring quietly home from some private sin. There's nothing to do about it. You start to die the moment you are born. The whole of life is cutting through the pack with death. So take it easy. Light a cigarette and be grateful you are still alive as you suck the smoke deep into your lungs."*  
(Fleming, 1957, pp.170-1)

The man who reads this goes on to explain that he is attempting to re-enact the last hours of Michael Stewart, the father of the woman upstairs. Before going to bed, he



would have sat up late reading something like this thriller. He goes up to the bedroom, changes into pyjamas, gets into bed. He explains that he would have felt unwell, become concerned, even frightened. He gets out of bed and makes his way downstairs again to get a tablet.

The woman is upstairs, in a room with several cassette recorders, all playing at once. They are all recordings of (what turns out to be) her own voice, talking about various aspects of her father's life - his health, his wartime career, his association with an important art collector after the War, his archaeological work in Central America. She is listening intently to all of them, from time to time writing down phrases, mnemonics, on post-it notes. She does not say anything. Leaving the recordings playing, she makes her way downstairs, leaving a trail of notes stuck to the walls as she goes by.

Downstairs, she finds the man lying on the kitchen floor with the still-undissolved tablet under his tongue. He says, "I'm sorry. This is a nuisance for you."

She rushes upstairs and goes into another room where a cameraman has set up an interview area, with a chair facing the camera. She sits in it and tries to speak. She gives the impression of not having spoken in a long time, of having to re-learn how to make sounds, words. Eventually she is able to articulate, as if it is somehow secret, that she is "...trying to get it all at once". The cameraman films the interview, which is witnessed by any audience members who have followed her into the room. The film is also relayed, live, to the television downstairs in the sitting room.

From time to time, throughout the piece, excerpts from an interview with the woman's mother, her father's widow, are played on this television.

The man is repeating the circuit of reading, getting ready for bed, lying down, getting up, going downstairs, taking a tablet, collapsing on the kitchen floor, and 'dying'.

In the sitting room, he is intercepted by the woman at his second reading aloud. She tries to make him reproduce the sound of her father's voice by giving instructions, which he follows: "Lower, more slowly, softer, there's a more ...moist.. quality to it..." etc. He continues to read using this voice, correcting himself to get it right. Then he goes upstairs to bed again.



The woman moves around the house, telling stories about her father, speculating about what she does not know. She moves around the stories; it seems impossibly detailed, impossibly imprecise. Sometimes she stops and looks in the bathroom mirror. She retrieves a shoe-box from a hiding place in the tape-recorder room<sup>20</sup>. She finds a quiet spot to open it; the first opening usually takes place in the bedroom, which is very dimly lit. Morton Feldman's *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello* (1995) is playing on a loop. There is a smell of chrysanthemums from somewhere. The box contains a blindfold (actually a sleep eye-mask) and a small assemblage of objects, individually wrapped in tissue paper. Blindfolding herself first, she selects an object and unwraps it, handling it very carefully and thoroughly. As if reading it, she whispers to herself an account of images or narrative, as if she is having a vision that is somehow generated by the object. When this appears to peter out, she re-wraps the object, removes the mask, returns both to the box and puts it back where she found it. This 'object séance' is repeated perhaps three or four times over the course of the performance.

The cameraman follows the man and films him continuously, occasionally telling him the time. This is not the actual, 'real', time; at the beginning of the performance, the cameraman re-sets the kitchen clock to 2.48. His aim is to end the performance at 4.17, the time in the morning that the woman found her father dying on the kitchen floor.

By telling him the time and filming him, the cameraman seems to put the other man under pressure. He also seeks to tempt him to drink, to lure him into a specific kind of performance of 'Michael Stewart', by hiding bottles of spirits where he will come across them - in waste paper baskets, behind cushions, in the wardrobe. The man appears to experience a confusion of 'himself' and 'Michael Stewart', of the task and the performance. This is emphasised, and encouraged, by the cameraman, who sometimes calls him 'Mr Stewart', and sometimes 'Mr Spaul'.

The cameraman helps him dress up in a dinner suit for the central passage of the piece,

---

<sup>20</sup>For the first set of performances, in April 2000, this box was located just inside the loft opening, which necessitated the fetching and climbing of a stepladder. Between the end of this first run and the beginning of the second (August 2000), I was getting something from the loft when the stepladder collapsed under me and I fell, quite awkwardly. Although I wasn't badly hurt, I was aware that I could have fallen over the balustrade on the landing, and that could have been very serious. I was reluctant to use the (replacement) stepladder for a while after that, and relocated the box for the second run of performances.



the beginning of the final section, what we called the 'Séance'. This takes place at the dining table, by candlelight. 'Michael Stewart' is drunk, the woman watches him closely, sitting opposite. She never knew her father when he drank; she is curious and uneasy. The voices of the dead speak through him. They say mundane things, or peculiar things, they say things that we remembered people we knew who are now dead saying.

They say:

"Who stuffed that white owl?"

"It seems that Calais is within your grasp, but not the whole of France."

"...and you never even wrote me a letter..."

"Admirable, admirable."

"Was there any talk of going to the bar?"

She is waiting for her father to 'speak' through the man, so she can ask him about the things she doesn't know, so she can interview him. But there are too many voices; the sound breaks up and distorts, like a mechanical failure ("Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain"). He falls to the ground in a drunken stupor, a possession trance.

In the final sequence, when he is in bed, feeling unwell and afraid, she tries but fails to prevent him from going downstairs to enact her father's death for the last time. From acting out someone else's death, it seems he will now appropriate it. She seems to relive the event, running down the stairs, calling out to her father. The piece ends with the cameraman's triumphant "4.17", or sometimes a more disgruntled "4.21" or "4.18".

### **2.1.3 The recurring image: performance's memory of itself**

A number of images and image complexes survived the performance-making process from the piece's initial inception. The use of sound, for example, remained focused upon the human voice, both in mediated form (recorded, in the past), and as itself a mediator, a live site for the re-auditioning of the dead. Our imagining of the Raudive



recordings took the form of a crowded wavelength, a clamour of voices all talking at once, trying to be heard but essentially giving the impression only of a fog of sound, disguised as the atmospheric and mechanical interference to which technology is heir. We, like Raudive, desired the murmur of the dead all around, rooms resonating with past conversations, a hum of the talking, muttering, twittering shades. In *Father...*, this sense of crowding round, of making'woolly with sound, was achieved by playing old tape recorders in a small room. The sound reproduction using old technology is far from crisp; there is hissing, distortion, thickening, tinniness, a pervasive background hum. Essentially a repetition of sounds, as all the recordings were of the same voice, speaking at the same sort of level, with the same rhythms and intonation, the effect was one of dense overlay, perhaps something like listening to thoughts rather than being among an invisible multitude. We imagined Raudive's recordings, before he subjected them to the abstraction processes of amplification and slowing down, to consist essentially of these mechanical 'background' sounds - hissing, scraping, humming. In Lars Von Trier's hospital saga, *The Kingdom* (1994), similar sounds, picked up in an otological test, are amplified and slowed down. In a tense and spare scene, reminiscent of another sound-haunted film, *The Conversation* (1974), the metallic crackle is revealed to be the voice of a dead child.

Steven Connor, in *Dumbstruck: a cultural history of ventriloquism* (2000) points out that the disembodied voice, whether this comes from a machine or an occluded source, is always already 'Uncanny' (see below), its association with death and the dead made through a separation from bodily origin. The recorded voice is at one remove in time even from the mediated (microphoned) voice of new performance. As a record, it holds the possibility of being, quite literally, a 'voice of the dead', of the past in the present. In *Father...*, the voice in the recordings is part of an attempt 'to get everything at once', in one place. Her voices all playing at once tell everything she knows about her father at the same time, but there is always something to add, something to re-tell, something to change; the task is unfinishable. In amongst the multiplications of her voice, inside the mesh of sound, the performer duplicates herself. Just as the recorded voice or image is at once 'here' with us and 'there', then, the Uncanny is in part constituted by a similar reduplication in time/space -- something situated 'then and there' that is also 'now and



here'. In performance, the body and voice of the performer partake of this. It is a performance's partial removal from the present, its relationship with the 'then and there', from which it derives its autonomy, its 'devout and forbidding presence' (Blau, 1990 : 149. See Chapter One of this thesis).

This capacity to shift out of the present is contained in the idea of the 'séance' as another trope of performance itself, an image-set (candlelight or darkness, interlocutors around a table) that is nevertheless configured by the auditory -- the unstable voice of the medium, the rapping on the table, or the sliding of the glass across the marked board. In the piece, there is the main 'séance', which provides a central passage, and an 'object séance', which is repeated several times and has the character of an essentially private communion with the dead through material artefacts, rather than a performed connection of the worlds of the dead and the living.

The 'object séance', as we came to call it, survived, only slightly modified, from the first stage, that of solo work presented to the others. The image came directly from a story my mother told me about going to see a fortune-teller who 'read' clients' futures, not in tea-leaves or the palms of their hands, but through personal items, objects, that they always carried with them. Handling my mother's metal nail file, the fortune-teller told her that she would soon "meet a man coming out of a mental fog"; this was subsequently understood to be my father. The idea that an object can be read in this way, as not just standing in, metonymically, for a person, but as some extension of them, a sort of psychic prosthesis, seemed to be a return to the material; the desire to hear voices in silence reconfigured as archaeology. I selected an assemblage of objects that my father had owned: a small Mayan model of a human face, made of a hard, dark-green jadeite, very basically carved with closed eyes, and a wide nose and mouth - its underside is flat and it fits into the palm of my hand; his father's dirk, its ebony handle carved with interlace; a Rosary made of what appear to be flat, brown seeds; a small plastic folder containing a St Christopher medal attached to a piece of card; a Second World War field dressing, still in its cotton pouch printed with instructions. Each item was wrapped separately in tissue paper and everything put into the shoebox (see above). I also added a square silk cravat, with a pattern of tiny parachutes stitched in gold, as a



further, unwrapped, object, and a sleep mask, with which I could blindfold myself to read each item by touch. During the rehearsal process, the material generated in each version of the séance became more and more fragmentary, shedding narrative cohesion and positioning as I found myself unwilling to seek out stories to tell, to imagine circumstances. By the final performances, the objects were no longer a locus for verbal articulacy of any kind, having condensed into their own solidity. Perhaps they became the site of my own resistance to the obsessional disclosure of the performance, the desire to remain unknowable.

In the second solo work performance, I had made a crude outline of a person out of chrysanthemum heads in the open bed. This too survived into the performances. I had intended the image to mimic the chalk outline of the body at a crime scene, while I read out an account of a private ritual in which a woman placed flowers among her sister's recently-discovered bones (see above). In *Father...*, this at first simply afforded us an olfactory dimension; the smell of the chrysanthemums pervaded the bedroom, even as the image itself lay concealed in the bed. Smell is material dispersed, the presence of something carried through another sense, a giveaway, a harbinger or a memory (see Classen, 1994). At the start of the 'Séance', which took place downstairs, the cameraman would turn back the sheet covering the flower man, take some video footage of it, and then leave the room. This leaving alone of the outline, the suggestion of a person, resembled the leaving of a patient in a sickroom, or of a coffin in a church overnight. It evoked the dream of the piece's title (see above), and began to draw in a sense of the performance as a vigil around a vacated space, or rather one which was always already empty. The flower man is not life-size, it is more the outline of a sort of manikin, its shape suggestive of the Cycladic figures of early Mediterranean culture. As such, it disperses the specifics of time and gender, standing in for the idea of remembering the dead gathered into a long human past, as much as for a particular dead person. The performer who stands in is up, dressed and downstairs, engaged in a drama of irretrievability, attempting the impossible. The outline in flowers of a figure in the bed can only remind us of who is not here, or like the crude and brief penumbra around a beamed up (or, in the cheaper version, teleported) character in a science fiction series, who is not *quite* here - caught in either the moment before, or the moment after, being



material, tangible, present.

The cameraman is another sort of medium, an intermediary between audience and performers, but one who is nevertheless unconcerned with the understanding, enjoyment or even wellbeing of either. He appears to own the structure of the performance, his is the attempt to fit it into a division of time, to give it a duration, to mark it as an event. The performance is known already by him, in that he seeks to have it fall out in a certain way, and be completed in a given time. In this, he himself stands in for a specific kind of presence, that which is marked theatrical, which haunts performance in all its contemporary manifestations, and to which it constantly makes reference. The cameraman wants something to happen, he wants the performer to act out a part, to be a character. He provokes the actor by providing him with the means to 'act as if' - the bottles that suggest drunkenness, the suit that dresses him up. The cameraman draws the performer *away* from the audience with whom he (the performer) is engaged as he tells them about the man whose last hours he is enacting, the book he is reading. The cameraman wants something to film, something from which to make an artefact, a document of something that took place. By his actions and preoccupations, he foregrounds the predicament of the actor-who-acts: is a great performance when I am myself, knowingly acting, or when I become somebody else, who does it for me? He begins by insisting that the performer create an illusion, first by dressing up, then pretending to be drunk; then he seeks to push him further, into a territory of possession or losing oneself, so that the performance then seems to have no choice but to embrace this as its central trope. The cameraman is satisfied when he has made a record of pre-ordained events, a sequence that he wishes to reconstruct, a sort of play whose success is constituted by the precision with which it clings to the time he has allotted it. After the cameraman's declared ending, his "4.17", he shows the artefact he has created, the material remains of the passage of time, in the form of a fifteen-minute video of the woman's mother talking about her husband (the woman's father), intercut with, or rather ruptured by, filmed moments from the performance. The performance has happened, there is a product, a unit of recorded time contains it, together with its audience. As it watches the chopped-up, completed, artefact, the audience witnesses itself, edited *in* by the cameraman. It may see itself, moving through the space, listening, watching,



resting, daydreaming. They encounter a version of the recent past, - fragmented, elusive, already irretrievable.

### **2.2.1 Writing '*Father...*' through psychoanalysis - a 're-introduction'**

In this section, I re-describe *in situ*:'s performance piece *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* through its relationships with specific aspects of psychoanalytic practice, relationships alluded to in the dream-account from which the piece takes its name (see the introduction to this chapter, above). Through this I use my reading of specific theories derived from psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Christopher Bollas, following Donald Winnicott, in what came to be known as Object Relations (see below), to situate performance practice within a network of relationship-processes that make up the psychic work of self-formation in everyday life.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the site-specific audience can itself be read in terms of a relationship, a dynamic process within the encounter that is performance itself. It is here that the affinity with psychoanalysis is laid bare, both partaking of an almost fractal logic of infinitely unfolding encounters, exchanges, transformations and relationships, the mutual play of free association and free-floating attention:

"Concerning art, where each small part is a sample of what you find elsewhere, there is at least the possibility of looking anywhere, not just where someone arranged you should. You are then free to deal with your freedom just as the artist did, not in the same way but, nevertheless, originally." (Goulish, 2000b, p.13)

### **2.2.2 Memory and forgetting as performance practices**

Memory and its corollary, forgetting, are embedded in performance's making of itself. Adrian Heathfield and Andrew Quick, in their introduction to *Performance Research: On Memory* (2000), describe the relationship as seen through the impetus to re-enact:



"In performance, the lost originary moment is (partially) retrieved and reconstituted in the space-time of a re-enactment, and this description comes close to defining how memory itself does its work. If memory ensures that something remains, then representation enables the remainders to endure, to be perceivable. Viewed like this, the act of remembrance can be seen as a form of theatricality, a bringing into appearance, and the theatrical act a form of remembrance." (ibid., p.1)

In *Father...*, we began by thinking about our relationship with the dead, who are necessarily in the past, and therefore retrievable only through memory, or through the work of memory-as-imagination upon material objects (a form of archaeology -- see Chapter Five below). In all acts of remembering, there are of course pieces of self-fashioning, identification, identity-formation; to a great extent, it is true to say that we are made of memories. The practice of psychoanalysis can use recalled material to enable an individual to re-imagine themselves, to re-appraise acts of identity-formation they undertook in the distant past. Freud, in his essay *Screen Memories*, presents a complex and intricate notion of the mechanism by which childhood memories are formed and used. If the past is hidden from us, behind a sort of screen, it is also upon that very screen that our memories are projected; a memory is formed, rather than simply retrieved, and put into a psychically-appropriate context. Thus, a memory of a given time reflects the life of the rememberer at the time it was aroused, and this is the moment of its formation (see Freud, 2003 : 3-22). The innumerable childhood memories where the subject sees herself as an object within the scene, from outside, as it were, attest to this later editing. For Freud, this was the same process of 'secondary revision' found in dreams and in hysterical symptoms. In performance practice, it is akin to the making an other of oneself discussed in Chapter One. If remembering is a way of constituting selves through the impetus of desire, its obfuscations and reformulations, it plays a similar role in the constitution of performance.

To remember something is to be re-minded; a memory is reconstituted anew with each recollection (Rose, 1993). We have the 'possibility of looking anywhere' for it. The phenomena which arouse memories in us themselves arise spontaneously from within the fabric of everyday life. As we move through the world, we are incorporating and re-



incorporating material through identification, appropriation, re-use. The elusiveness of memory is contained in interstices, the gap between the remembered thing and its present analogue - the remnant, the reminder.

Performance, as noted by Heathfield and Quick, is frequently constituted by and through acts of memory, the object of the rehearsal process being to refine away the evidence of recall, to feign the immediacy of a thing not seen or done before:

"Coming to formation through a process of remembering, all performance acts are built upon the drive to repeat, re-articulating the (absent) rehearsed into the (present) moment of the live event and by this repetition reconfiguring the 'real' world, which exists outside the representational space of the theatre, upon its various stages." (ibid., p.1)

Mieke Bal, in the same volume, makes an explicit distinction between performance and performativity, where, in the latter case, "... memory would only stand in the way of the success of the performing, to be swatted away like a fly." (Bal, 2000 : 102)

In *in situ*'s piece, *Father, can't you see I'm burning...*, the act of remembering is no longer fully concealed within the rehearsal process, but foregrounded as the central impetus of the work. In fact, it could be said that the performance itself takes the form of a rehearsal, full of repetitions, digressions, failures, subterfuges, repairs and reiterations; it even culminates in a kind of internal performance, in the form of the appropriated death of Michael Stewart. But the performers know this will happen, the cameraman knows it is scheduled to happen; it has been rehearsed. What the audience witnesses can be seen as an almost-explicit effort to turn this event into a memory, by making it arouse the memory of the performer's father's real death.

The performance is obsessed with the impossibility of such a re-enactment, and with the concomitant impossibility of remembering everything, of getting it all at once. As such, it seems to balk at its own performativity, the moments when to speak a memory risks defining something. It takes the form of an attempt to assemble all of one person's memories, and knowledge, of another, but cannot bear the weight of the task. The completion (or perhaps the desire for it?) implicit in death proves as illusory, as elusive, as knowing them in life.



The performance is obsessed with forgetting:

"Forgetting is a way of describing the remaking involved in substitution (and by the same token, the most dangerous insights, or revelations, are those one cannot forget: they become fetishes rather than objects for use, for forgetting). To make a substitute is to make a difference. Forgetting is the precondition for symbolization. It instigates the work - the dream-work - that goes on behind the scenes. The substitution that we call symbolism is a reminder that what we call the past only happened once." (Phillips, 1994, p.36)

*Father...* is haunted by the fact that the past only happened once, by the *gone-ness* of it. In rehearsal, the performance-making process, the struggle to remember, to get it all at once, elides into the substitutions of forgetting -- the work of replacement, revisiting, reformulation. In the earlier, descriptive section, I emphasised the return and re-use of material with this notion in mind. It seems very difficult to say definitively that anything at all was discarded outright in the making of the piece. Each time an element was revisited -- the medium, the newspaper cuttings, the fitfully-sleeping figure in the bed, the recorded voice, the flower man -- it seemed to have undergone a process akin to a substitution. While this is perhaps embedded in the performance processes of all *in situ*:'s work, it is most powerful and pertinent in *Father...*, where the desire to remember has taken on the nature of a symptom, or of a neurosis itself. Encountering the subterfuges of memory, the forgettings and lapses that lie beside what is being remembered, the audience are, from moment to moment, in the position of the analyst who attempts to trace the past life of the image back through its meanings and evasions. As the three performers move through the piece, they are engaged in a dynamic encounter with what has been transformed, discarded and recycled in the process of making the work. Through this loose-linked chain of reminiscences, this piece can at once be 'about' memory and yet retain its resistance to what Fiona Templeton, in a discussion of her performance, *Recognition*, has described as 'memorialisation':

"... to resist the slippage of the sick person or the person who's dying out of the normal functioning of the world, to resist becoming hallowed already as a dying person." (Quick, 2000, p.115)



The territory of our relationship with the dead, as with the dying, is vulnerable to such memorialisation, which I would locate, for *in situ*:'s performance, in the risk of appearing to present some sort of completed, or definitive version of Michael Stewart's life (and death). Wherever the *act* of remembering, that is, the act of organising memory into words, is foregrounded (the woman's stories and recordings, her mother's presence on video), there is a concomitant emphasis on the unreliability, the *substitutability* of those memories. Audience and performers are both held in something like Goulish's 'Infinite' - "... free to deal with your freedom just as the artist did, not in the same way but, nevertheless, originally."

### 2.2.3 The Uncanny and the poetics of unease

In his 1919 essay, *The Uncanny*, Freud began an investigation into what has become an "aesthetics of anxiety" (Haughton, 2003 : xli). Drawing first upon the lexicography of the German word 'Unheimlich' and its cognates (or lack of them) in other European languages, he is able to arrive at a reading of the term that incorporates both the familiar and the strange through the mechanism of repression. For Freud, 'Unheimlich' is both 'un-homely' and 'un-secret', for 'heimlich' carries the meaning 'secret' as well as 'homely, familiar'.

"*Heimlich* thus becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*. The uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, 'the unhomely') is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, 'the homely'). (Freud, 2003, p.134)

Un-secreting implies an exposure, a return of something repressed, something that once was known. The Uncanny reveals what is hidden by exposing only the fact of its concealment:

"... the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar." (ibid., p.124)

Simple, unrecognised, familiarity does not, however, bestow uncanniness. Nor does doubt, the "intellectual uncertainty" posited by one of Freud's predecessors in this



investigation.<sup>21</sup> Of particular interest is the example of uncertainty between life and death; the idea that one might not be sure if a corpse is really dead, or a living person is actually alive (or indeed a person...). The following aside is also highly pertinent to the present exploration:

"... (Jentsch) adds the uncanny effect produced by epileptic fits and the manifestations of insanity, because these arouse in the onlooker vague notions of automatic - mechanical - processes that may lie hidden behind the familiar image of the living person." (Freud, 2003, p.135)

Within these two examples lies a territory that skirts the edges of performance. It is reminiscent not just of repression and return, the familiar made strange (Shklovsky again), but of the apparently rather innocuous idea that *something can be more than one thing at once*. This is also a definition of performance, in particular a performance practice that seek to incorporate acknowledgement of the work's own present, not necessarily in the form of post-modern irony, but also the materiality of bodies, the immediacy of action. Like Freud's German word, with its 'un-' prefix implying repression even as it shows something, performance contains a play of absence and presence that is always ambivalent. In site-specific work, space and environment lose their capacity to hold and contextualise, instead partaking of the un-ease of being neither one thing nor the other (or more than one thing at once).

*Father...* takes place in a house that plays itself, but in doing so exposes its other meanings, functions and relationships. It exposes its own haunting (*'ein unheimliches Haus'*). In terms of the concept of the uncanny, this is of course, something of a homecoming in itself:

"Architecture has been intimately linked to the notion of the uncanny since the end of the eighteenth century. At one level, the house has provided a site for endless representations of haunting, doubling, dismembering, and other terrors in literature and art." (Vidler, 1992 : ix)

---

<sup>21</sup> Otto Jentsch (see Hugh Haughton's introduction to the *New Penguin Freud: The Uncanny* pp xli-lv for a description of Freud's literary antecedents in this territory). The examples used by Freud to refute these particular definitions are telling, and they do not quite resist uncanniness in the way that he hoped (as Haughton points out in his introduction to the essay collection, Freud returns to Jentsch's idea to worry away at it).



Vidler goes on to remind us that this relationship does not stem from the intrinsic nature of any given building:

"... [T]he "uncanny" is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular spatial conformation; it is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of the mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity ..." (ibid., p.11)

The UK-based German performance artist, Ernst Fischer, makes what he calls 'living-room theatre' in his London flat. Unlike *in situ*;, he makes more or less radical interventions into the appearance of this space in order to stage performances, nevertheless retaining (sometimes re-configuring) the domesticity of the environment:

"... [T]he staging requirements of a particular performance may introduce semi-permanent additions or modifications to the living space, which, in turn, affect the psychic and physical experience of its occupation. In other words, theatrical and everyday signs and signifiers overlap and co-exist in continually shifting relationships in the space of living-room theatre which is never exclusively a theatre nor entirely a private space but at the same time - and at all times - *both and also*." (Fischer, 2001, p.121. Emphasis in original)

Fischer's interest lies in using performance to open out new readings of spatial dynamics from the perspectives of queer theory and postmodern geographies. His use of the uncanny as a trope for exposing and exploring the multiplicities and instabilities of domestic space is nevertheless highly pertinent to a reading of *in situ*:'s work.

For us, as much as for Fischer, the house is both the site of our performance and of our domestic lives. Because the performance itself has to some extent emerged from everyday life, in the form of the family history, memories and experience of one of the performers, the house-as-site has also produced the performance and itself can be said to perform. Insofar as Michael Stewart, a particular dead person, is a subject of the piece, he is presented on a number of levels through the material of the site itself. By virtue of being commonplace, a house can map onto any other. Living rooms, dining rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms, - all have intimate atmospherics of their own which are



translatable between spaces. Dream houses, half-remembered houses of early childhood, the houses of friends and lovers, homes for years or overnight crash-pads, all can be evoked by simply inhabiting a space that is marked domestic for us. The *both and also* that has arisen from the uncanny becomes translatable into an unstable spatial identity, whereby discrete places within the house, and of course the house itself, stand in for other places from moment to moment in the performance. This phenomenon is also carried over from the performance-making process, further complexing the space for the performers as they work in the remnants of repressed or removed concepts, images and ideas - 'the place where this once was'. In the house, the psychoanalytic question of '*Who is speaking to Whom?*' is shifted onto spatial terms '*From where am I looking/speaking? What space does this traverse?*'

In Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, when Scottie kisses the transformed/reverted Judy-as-'Madeleine', the slightly seedy hotel room literally 'turns around' them into the Mission stables where Scottie kissed 'Madeleine' for the last time. It is the performance of this action that both realises Judy's second transformation into 'Madeleine' and re-evokes the setting of the previous relationship. In performance, while this cannot be demonstrated cinematically, actions can nevertheless release/realise other spaces for performers and audiences.

As performers, we are always already in (at least) two places at once; in the house, among the memories of everyday life, of making the work, of the previous moment, we inhabit a space that multiplies and alters itself around us. In this, the space of performance mirrors the refusal, the impossibility, of a stable subject who 'presences' a singular identity, one that is not *both and also*, the occluding of the *unheimlich*.

#### **2.2.4 'I am not myself' - the haunted subject of performance**

The performer works from within a relationship with the space of performance. In *Father...*, I am always a version of myself, in my house; in one respect, I have little choice, living through this body, inhabiting this house. I am also the person whose task it is to perform the piece, and from this I enter a series of overlapping identities that



emerge from my lived experience-as-relationship. I am the daughter of this person, the partner of that person, the colleague or friend of another. Moments or passages in the performance become a means of reflecting upon different self-states, thereby mirroring the attempt to get it all at once that is the stated aim of one persona/position within the piece.

Recent critical work has emphasised the de-stabilised identity of the performer in new performance as a trope of the postmodern subject, resisting singularity, fixity and sequential narrative (see for example Auslander, 1994 and 1997; Goulish, 2000a; Freeman, 2002):

"Performance, like dreaming, presents us with intersections. In a performance, a performer is not a single entity. Instead of a unit, a performer is an identity in motion in a particular direction. A performer is a BECOMING." (Goulish, 2000, pp.78-9)

This statement, by Matthew Goulish of Goat Island, identifies performance as a specifically processual form, driven by desire as 'motion in a *particular direction*'. Identity is negotiated from within a nexus of embodiment and fantasy/imagination. Goulish continues:

"Myself BECOMING one of the six simple machines  
Myself BECOMING an illustration in a figure skating manual  
Myself BECOMING The Creature from the Black Lagoon  
Myself BECOMING Hanuman the Hindu Monkey Spirit  
Myself BECOMING an autistic child  
Myself BECOMING myself at age 6  
Myself BECOMING a microphone stand  
Myself BECOMING myself in the present moment  
Myself BECOMING an emergency room doctor  
Myself BECOMING an angel in a painting by Nicolas Poussin"  
(ibid., p. 79)

This configuration of desire as a flow that creates a series of becomings, never settling and always in flux, is essentially Deleuzian. It is itself creative, not predicated on lack or necessarily subject to containment or repression.<sup>22</sup> I introduce this as a way of describing the work of the performer in relation to identity, here seen as motion. While

---

<sup>22</sup> See Auslander, 2008, pp 83 - 90 for a concise outline of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Freud and their reformulation of the concept of desire as it appears with psychoanalytic theory.



such a description does not engage with psychic processes, at least as understood psychoanalytically, it offers an account of the performer's imaginal work as something akin to task. It is steadfastly non-relational, in the sense that nothing from the outside is being taken in and incorporated; images are being allowed to pass through the performer, influencing the body. This approach is useful insofar as it relates to the condition of performance itself, which renders identity contingent upon relation-in-the-moment. It is in this that I see its close affinity with the psychoanalytic relationship itself.

Elin Diamond, in an essay entitled, *The Violence of "We"* (1992), dissects the relationship of identity and identification, situating it within a project of imagining a 'politics of identification' that:

"... dismantles the phenomenological universals of transcendent subjects and objects, that places identity in an unstable and contingent relation to identification, and that works close to the nerves that divide/connect the psychic and the social." (Diamond, 1992, p.397)

Following Freud, Diamond traces a critique of the notion of identification as a process by which the subject 'colonises' and appropriates the other, to one which is fluid and, above all, *transformative*. The identifying subject is always transformed by the identifications it makes. Thus, it contains the history of all its object-choices, -- "... the history of [the] psychic life with others" (ibid. 396). The concept of the unified and cohesive self is again undermined by the impulse to desire, relationship and transformation. More importantly, it is in the honouring of the specificity, - social, historical, cultural, personal, - of each object that its transformative potential is realised.

In the psychoanalytic situation itself, the analysand moves towards, and away from, identities and identifications in which the analyst is also implicated through the phenomena of Transference and Countertransference.

In psychoanalysis, Transference is a highly specific term used to describe the patient's relating to the analyst in the present exactly as they once related to important figures in their past life. Their behaviour, feelings and reactions may seem out of kilter, inappropriate, even jarring, in the present. In the Transference, the person in analysis



speaks and acts *out of* another (past) identity, to someone who is *in the place of another*. The Countertransference was originally formulated by Freud as the equivalent reaction in the analyst, to be offset (it is hoped) by the awareness granted by their own analysis. In contemporary psychoanalytic practice the term has acquired an additional meaning:

"Countertransference' ... is not a distorted perception of the patient, but an accurate one. It is the therapist's subjective reaction to the unconscious messages which the patient is directing towards the therapist, a phenomenon which gives a possible access to the patient's state of mind and intentions."  
(Lomas, 1994, p.45)

These 'unconscious messages' are tropes of the performative, the descendants of the *fin-de-siècle*'s hysterical conversions, in that they express what is inaccessible to language at a specific moment, from a specific perspective. Anna O's famous formulation of a 'talking cure' reveals psychoanalysis itself, as practised by the analysed, to be another sort of conversion, where bodily phenomena are rendered into words. As such, it seems to oppose performance - a situated, idiomatic, bodily *act*, and language, a route into order (the Lacanian Symbolic) and a submission to powers of description. The Countertransference as defined by Lomas restores the integrity of the psychoanalytic encounter as predicated on relation, a two-way play of evocation, reflection and evasion that neither replaces language nor partakes of it.

Encompassing this, the practice of psychoanalysis itself must revolve around a play of identities, always harbouring the question: '*who is speaking, and to whom?*'. Seeking, through this, to unpick the formation of those identities in the constructions and evasions of memory, dreams, fantasy and desire, psychoanalytic work draws up alongside performance-making and performing as a mode of both engaging in and of scrutinising the dynamics of relation, of *what is evoked in the other*.

Theorising the performer-audience relationship in terms of Transference and Countertransference as I have described it above exposes this relationship as an active relational dynamic in which fantasy is incorporated into an ongoing experience of self and other. The imaginary audience, a fluid combination and re-combination of repositioned selves and articulate others (see above p.20), and the actual audience can



both be seen to operate through this. Through my own performance of the piece, and my witnessing of the work of other performers as I move through it, multiple states, images and memories are evoked for me. When other performers and the director discuss the work in rehearsal - where we have worked only with an imagined audience - I come to know that similar processes are undergone by them. In the same way, the audience shares with us a sense of their individual processes within the same dynamic.

Through the course of the performances, and subsequently through other *in situ*: performances, the imaginary and actual audiences begin to inform each other's experiences. This becomes part of the performance work.

Within *Father, can't you see I'm burning...*, we as performers work in modes that are not necessarily derived from recognised theatrical acting techniques, nor from the cool delivery of some postmodern performances. We work with reference to both, that is, behaving 'as if', but allowing failure, doubt and hesitation to expose the presence of any illusion generated. Such performances draw primarily upon what the company has come to refer to as 'hauntings', - concepts of mediumship, trance and possession. Our use of these phenomena and their imagery is as a commentary upon practices that privilege the performer's interiority and private understanding as the originary grounding of their performance. If, by playing through imaginings of these behaviours, using popular designations of their presence - rolling eyes, twitching, falling, stiffening, rocking back and forth etc. etc., the performance appeals to a codified behaviour *that is readily recognised as such*, it becomes a sort of acting within acting. This is a performance mode which, unlike the dramatic (strangely), is redolent of deception and illusion, an arena where the audience's credulity is strained rather than bestowed. The audience is on guard against being tricked; they are watching for the knocking or tapping hand, the moving lips, the assistant hidden behind the curtain. If the audience won't be fooled, the performers no longer have to act knowing. Thus, the diegetic content of the piece (such as it is) is both reinforced and destabilised. In *Father...*, there is a 'séance' where the male performer takes the role of medium, but does not explicitly indulge in the behaviours described above. He rather appears oblivious, focused instead



on the array of bottles before him, before selecting brandy and pouring and drinking several glasses. Although he could be seen as steeling himself for some anticipated ordeal, it is in fact the female performer who behaves in the expectant, reverent manner of one scrutinizing every movement, every gesture, every flicker, for meaning. Even if he is the medium, she must play the diviner.

Haunting, mediumship and possession, as derivations of the Uncanny and its *both and also* are affined with the subject-relationships of psychoanalysis - repetition, hysterical conversion and the Transference-Countertransference complex.

A haunted space is configured through an imagined relationship with time. Here, a specific passage of the past is folded onto the present and repeated or re-enacted until some reparation or restitution is effected by its witnesses or stand-ins. That the events concerned are nearly always traumatic, or referring to the traumatic, is compounded by this repetition. If a trauma is something not fully experienced the first time around (Caruth, 1996), it must be revisited again and again until it can be reconfigured and absorbed into understood experience. Haunting phenomena are usually circumspect, incomplete (being *both* here and *also* not-here); certain sensory fields are edited out -- there is a picture with no sound, or a sound, smell or sensation (perhaps all three), but without a vision. The apparition cannot make a direct request for what it needs to be laid to rest, to stop recurring. The haunting must be traced back, remembered, to its source, its originary trauma. Like the recurring dream and the hysterical symptom, it seems to demand interpretation. The subject - the haunted place or, in psychoanalysis, the individual - seems caught in a moment that anchors them to the past, and thereby disrupts the flow of time. Repetition, or rather re-enactment, once again (see Chapter One above) becomes the means by which this disruption is expressed.

In *Father*,..., the attempts at re-enactment (of Michael Stewart's death) through which the piece is haunted also serve to expose the differences created by the irresistible passage of time. The performance is suspended between the desire to re-create the past in order to know it completely, and an equally impossible present in which everything is finished and on time.



The medium, or possessed person performs an accumulation of meanings and histories, exhibiting a multiplicity of identities and subject positions. Freudian notions of repetition as compulsive re-enactment place the neurotic sufferer in a specific relation to the act of remembering, actively haunting their own lives in the present, as they are haunted psychically by events in the past at which they were not fully present. As with the conversions of hysteria, these performances take as their object the body/voice of the performer, so it becomes the other through which the instability of the subject - its *both and also* - can be demonstrated.

The psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas describes the hysteric's behaviour within the analytic setting in terms of performance:

"Freud experienced and registered the hysteric's theatre, in which the analyst is confronted with many others, and he also noted that she communicated through a forceful language of imagery ..." (Bollas, 1987, p.190)

This puts the analyst in the position of

"... a witness-accomplice, a form of triangulation in which the hysteric compels the analyst to observe her introjects by means of a kind of performance art." (ibid.)

If hysteria is a conversion of psychic turbulence into bodily experience, psychoanalysis is an attempt at a further conversion - its 'talking cure' (see above). Hysteria is bound up with performance as something that *cannot be done/shown any other way*; it may confront its audience "... with many others ..." and use "... a forceful language of imagery... ". Its communicative effectiveness can be said to reside in identificatory processes similar to Transference and Countertransference, whereby a sense of an experience or perspective is transmitted *by means of performance* to another. Bollas' 'triangulation' can be seen as a reverberation of the Uncanny, the familiar repositioned, re-sited as an object through which subjecthood can be reassembled and re-experienced. The performer, like the hysteric, or like the medium, passes through a number of identities and identifications, but remains. In showing the passage and effect of 'introjects' that constitutes the making of performance, she is implicating the audience in an agitation of the notion of a completable present. The 'now you see it, now you don't'



quality of the Uncanny is thus further emphasised as the process of making familiar is exposed.

### **2.2.5 Objects transitional and transformational: material in a ghost-world**

In this section I will continue to develop the idea of performance as a particular kind of relationship-process, and one that bears comparison with the work of self-formation as it appears in a specific development of psychoanalytic Object Relations theory.

Object Relations is the name of a theoretical approach in psychoanalysis that was developed, predominantly in Britain, during and after the Second World War. Freud's arrival in London as a refugee from Nazism in 1938 seemed to ensure that Britain would become some sort of epicentre for development and conflict in psychoanalysis, even though its founder would only live for one more year. The social upheavals of wartime, especially the disruption of what had come to be perceived as normal family life, through absent fathers, and, for city-dwelling children, evacuation, had a powerful influence upon the interests and theoretical dynamics of the 'British School' of psychoanalysis as it was to develop. Melanie Klein, another refugee from Europe, continued her work with children, using a playing technique in place of the freely associating speech of the adult analysand. She developed a theory of psychic life that was based on relationship, rather than the instinctual 'drives' postulated by Freud (and supported by his daughter Anna, with whom Klein remained in bitter dispute). It is fundamentally this approach that came to be called Object Relations. Lavinia Gomez, in *An Introduction to Object Relations* (1997), describes the derivation of the term:

"The term 'object' does not refer to an inanimate thing, but is a carry-over from the Freudian idea of the target, or object, of the instinct. In Object Relations terms it is used in the philosophical sense of the distinction between subject and object. *Our need for others is the need of an experiencing 'I' for another experiencing 'I' to make contact with...*

"... Object Relations sees the self as a personal sphere which develops and exists within a context of relationship, and is itself made up of internal relationships between different aspects of the person." (ibid., pp.1-2. Emphasis mine.)



In *Father...* I perform an attempt to enmesh myself in innumerable object relationships in order to re-create the presence of my dead/living father *as a means of making contact* with another experiencing 'I', in the form of the other performers, and the audience. As we have seen in Chapter One above, an integral part of the process of making performance is what I have termed 'making an other of oneself', which is preparatory to, and stands alongside, the live audience. While it is fair to say that this mesh of relationships consists of persons external and internal, there still remains the question of the thing, the object as material. As an artefact of human activity, material objects are particularly well placed to stand in for internal figures, states and relationships. It is not simply that they can remind us of the world, to a very great extent they *are* the world; lives are lived in a world of material.

It was the pioneering paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott who began to investigate the use of specific external objects by infants and young children. Klein had worked with children using toys and other materials in free play, and Freud himself had written of a child (in fact his nephew) using an empty thread spool on the end of a piece of string to enact the disappearance and miraculous reappearance of his mother (the oft-quoted 'Fort-Da' [away-here] game), and Winnicott's work continued this. By observing the use infants made of particular external phenomena, he formulated the theory of the 'Transitional Object'.

The Transitional Object is an item, such as a soft toy or piece of cloth, or a song, story, ritual or particular happening (these non-material objects are properly termed Transitional Phenomena) that enables the child to manage the unease associated with the transition between being absolutely dependent upon the mother and the beginning of separation from her. The object is the concrete embodiment of the state of transition, and its symbolic power is derived from what the child herself imputes to it. After a period of intense attachment to the object, the infant gradually allows it to become marginalised, as her confidence in managing both connectedness and separation grows. Winnicott then goes on to suggest that the habit of external object use continues to aid and inform the development of the self:

"At this point my subject widens out into that of play, and of



artistic creativity and appreciation, and of religious feeling, and of dreaming, and also of fetishism, lying and stealing, the origin and loss of affectionate feeling, drug addiction, the talisman of obsessional rituals, etc." (Winnicott, 1971: 6)

In his *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self-Experience* (1992), Christopher Bollas follows Winnicott, and takes up Freud's model of the dream work to describe the use of objects in self-formation, within and outside the analytic setting. Bollas discusses the process by which humans invest objects of the external world, their lived environment in other words, with the affect brought about by specific experiences. This creates for each individual an ever-expanding array of objects that occupy an 'intermediate space' between private (internally configured) and public (belonging to the world) and which is formed by a negotiation between the perceived nature of those particular things (what it is like) and the subject's state of mind (Bollas, 1992 : 18). Bollas compares this work with the site-specific dynamics of the Aboriginal Australian relationship of person to country, landscape and group:

"We all walk about in a metaphysical concrescence of our private idioms, our culture, society, and language, and our era in history. Moving through our object world, whether by choice, obligation, or invitational surprise, evokes self states sponsored by the specific objects we encounter. In a very particular sense, we live our life in our own private dreaming." (ibid., p.19)

*Father, can't you see I'm burning...* explicitly seeks to unravel such a 'private dreaming', by attempting to take every accessible facet of an individual experience of another (now dead, but still resolutely uncompletable) person in order to exhibit an exhaustive and definitive assemblage - to get it all at once. The task is rendered impossible by the ceaseless, proliferative dream-work of object use and the unending processes of self-formation. Every aspect that emerges - an anecdote, an artefact, a photograph, a name - from the execution of the performer's task in the piece produces new relationships and encounters. These become associated with further objects in the course of the performance, just as they and others have been in its history, its making. To a greater or lesser degree, audience members participate in this object-nominating, on behalf of their



own self-formation, and according to it. Through this the performance becomes a play of negotiations, understandings between subject states that mirrors the analytic situation:

"Being a character, then, means bringing along with one's articulating idiom those inner presences - or spirits- that we all contain, now and then transferring them to a receptive place in the other, who may knowingly or unknowingly be inhabited by them." (ibid., p.62)

This brings us back to the paradigm of the Countertransference, as described above, but it is enriched by a highly specific understanding of the relationship of the transiting self with the material world of actual objects.

In *Father...* this is evoked by the use of archaeological imagery in the form of excavation photographs, books and excavated or otherwise 'recovered' artefacts (the box from the loft/study). The object is by turns the material signature of an event, a repository of prior experience, a marker for a self-state, a dream symbol, a catalyst for fantasy, all or several of these things at once. It is the very concrete-ness of material artefacts that ensures their potency within the context of performance. Objects *as themselves* allow us not only to take part in encounters with our own remembered experiences and states of mind, but potentially with those of others, and with an extended collective human past. The memory-bearing capacity of material objects and concomitant ability to cathect emotion and imagination in us lies beyond their usefulness as symbols or substitutes, metonymic or otherwise, for immaterial phenomena. In their materiality they are bound into our experience of ourselves as embodied subjects. As bodies themselves, they constitute and recall discrete performances, and are tangible witness to the past in the present, and therefore to the passage of time itself.

Many performances, like analyses, are essentially processual in character, rather than productive, insofar as they are about their audiences/participants *within a relationship*. The live encounter, like the fifty-minute hour (or for that matter an entire psychoanalysis), leaves no material trace, and it is this paradox that has come to be seen by some commentators, most famously Peggy Phelan, to be at the heart of performance:

"Performance's only life is in the present. Performance



cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being, ... becomes itself through disappearance." (Phelan, 1993, p. 146)

Performance in fact frequently produces residual objects, as argued by Joshua Sofaer in his essay *Conflict of interest: performance as a spectator* (2000), and these can, and do, 'participate in the circulation of representations of representations' that constitutes the economy of cultural memory. The status of objects used or produced in the course of performance, need not necessarily be that of documentation or record, although of course they may become so by default. Material, including any residue of performance actions, cannot be said to *be* performance itself, but is bound up with it in such a way that always allows it to be seen subsequently as *another form of* performance. The capacity of material objects to signify actions over time and space, and their embeddedness in networks of relationship between acting human agents and their world is what constitutes this performative presence. In evoking memory and fantasy, or even cathecting emotion, objects *perform*, in the sense of 'acting on', those who encounter them. The responses they elicit have bodily effects that originate beyond the physicality of the material itself - its warmth, roughness, dryness, fragility, whatever. An engagement with the materiality of objects and space itself is thus integral to the impact of performance upon performer and audience. What lingers is indeed residue - action and event take up residence in material, allowing for the possibility of a continued acting on its witnesses, holding in tension an encounter of performance and its own witness.



## Concluding remarks

*Father, can't you see I'm burning...* gathered together many of *in situ*'s primary concerns and themes at a very early stage in the company's life. Reflecting upon the piece in the present (the time of writing is almost six years after it was first performed), allows a perspective that is not quite that of the dreamer, nor of someone recalling events that simply happened. Whatever it does, performance does not simply happen. It is an event, or a series of events, which one is conscious of producing or causing to happen at the time. This is even the case with performances that consist partially or entirely of aleatory phenomena. Performance is witnessed either by an audience and by its makers, or by one of these alone. It is constituted as relationship and cannot therefore be unwitnessed. In this it has a family resemblance to psychoanalysis, a quintessential practice of relationship.

In my description, re-description and discussion of *Father...*, I have attempted to show how the two practices, of performance and psychoanalysis, share a heuristic that is based upon the materiality of presence, and the capacity to convert a particular form of experience (bodily/sensory, emotional/intellectual) into another or others. For both, this is the stuff of the encounter, what we make of the *material* of our own existence as we move through the world. As experiences that are somehow aware of themselves, performance and psychoanalysis partake of what Christopher Bollas describes as 'liftings' (Bollas, 1992: 29). These are encounters with objects that "...release us into intense inner experiencings which somehow emphasize us." (ibid., p.29) He describes such experiences as:

"... a dense condensation of instinctual urges, somatic states, body positions, proprioceptive organizings, images, part sentences, abstract thoughts, sensed memories, recollections, and felt affinities, all of a piece. It is impossible to put this complexity into words, but there is an other who is partly there and that other is the I. I have hundreds, by my death millions, of sequential self states arising from the dialectical meetings between my self and object world ..." (ibid., p.29)

Within *in situ*'s site-specific performances, the object worlds of performer and audience overlap, and the transitional space of the experience is under constant negotiation between them.



## Chapter Three

### Between selves: states of performance

*This chapter is in part about the relationship of in situ:'s work to both the broader field of theatre and what is sometimes referred to as 'the postmodern project'. Because the company's collaborators, the participants in the performance projects written about here, come from a variety of backgrounds, are mostly without any artistic training, and many without any academic training, I am often in the position of thinking about this relationship, and the ways in which it makes itself felt as we work. Performers join in situ: through our teaching programme (see above p. 4) . Many want to try out something they see others doing every day on television, in films and (sometimes) on the stage. This means they already may have very clear ideas about acting and theatre, and these ideas are derived from exposure to the naturalistic form of dramatic acting that dominates TV and popular cinema. If they continue working with us, they take part in an ongoing discussion of the limits of this approach.*

*In 'Decameron', the storytelling framework presented an opportunity to examine the idea of the actorly persona as a specific sort of self-fantasy that is, for some, at the heart of the desire to act. I am aware that I have placed the object of this desire in opposition to certain kinds of approaches to performance as task, practices sometimes referred to as postmodern (see for example Freeman, 2003), where a performer is the person whose job it is to do something (read this text, say the lines of, but not 'as', this character). This opposition is fragile, not least because in practice, where such notional strategies might be realised, performers are rarely working from a single premise, impulse or intention, and what is produced can easily thwart or subvert conscious manipulation.*

*Nick Kaye, in his introduction to 'Postmodernism and Performance' (Macmillan, 1994), notes that postmodernity itself can be seen as an evasion as, in questioning the legitimacies of modernity, there is also a refusal to produce 'the newly legitimate' to replace them (1994: 2). Kaye goes on to discuss performance in particular as being*



*constituted by eventhood and material presence, including the presence of the audience, thus causing it to be seen as resistant to the modernist ideal of the autonomous work of art that is self-sufficient, existing outside and somehow beyond the conditions of its reception. For in situ:, the domestic performance space and the multiple focus within it, sponsors a necessarily pluralistic approach whereby the experience of the work is constituted differently by each performer and audience member as they follow their own trajectory through the events of the performance. In addition to this, perhaps because of it, there is always "... a preoccupation with a performance's coming into being, with a shadowing of the performance by the act of performance" (Kaye, 1994: 141).*

## **Introduction**

The performer's conscious modification and manipulation of their own presence is a fundamental constituent of performance. In this chapter I will examine this as a specific aspect of *in situ:*'s practice, focusing on the 2000-2001 piece, *Decameron*, in which performers used a range of strategies, across the spectrum of approaches which has come to be broadly defined as 'from acting to performance'<sup>23</sup>. My own discussion of *in situ:*'s *Decameron* is necessarily framed within a critical description of what is implied by the respective terms 'acting' and 'performance', the practical repercussions of their differentiation, and, ultimately, the possibility of a practice that incorporates and plays out a desire for both.

In this chapter I will examine, and critique, the former, Acting<sup>24</sup>, as a highly codified practice embedded within a complex of cultural production that includes mediatised performance (film and television in particular) as well as live theatre itself. The pervasiveness of mediatised forms in particular, and their near-exclusive use of a specific approach to acting that is derived from the Naturalism of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century theatre, has led to the entrenchment of assumptions and judgements by audiences about the intentions and behaviour of performance practitioners across a

---

<sup>23</sup> See Auslander, 1997, Zarrilli, 2002 and Kirby, 1972 for some formulations of these two terms and the differences between them.

<sup>24</sup> Where I am using the term in the sense I have described it here, I give it a capital initial 'A', to differentiate it from notions of 'behaving' (as in "he is acting as a doorman" and so forth).



range of artistic forms and approaches.

'Performance' is a term frequently employed within the academic discourse of Theatre and Performance Studies to describe the mode of being 'on' *and at the same time communicating an awareness of being so*. This is characteristic of so-called 'new performance', also referred to as 'postmodern' or 'contemporary' performance, and it is itself often seen (and practised as) a critique of the theatrical as illusion and/or spectacle. In this mode, performers are usually some version of their everyday persona - 'themselves', - rather than playing a character, or otherwise pretending to be someone other than who they 'really' are. An exploration of these practices follows from my discussion of Acting as outlined above. After a more detailed examination of the differentiation (or otherwise) and approaches to these practices, followed by a brief descriptive outline of *in situ*'s *Decameron*, I will explore the company's distinctive relationship with them, and the implications of this for performance practice.

I have chosen *Decameron* as the exemplary performance through which to explore these fundamental issues of practice, because I feel the material therein afforded the performers a particularly wide range of strategies for engaging in the manipulation of presence between Acting and performance. In addition, the intimacy and proxemics of the domestic setting meant that all such work was 'close up', exposing a level of detail in both execution and experience (for performers as well as audience) of which the company was necessarily aware throughout the creation and performance of the piece.

These differing performance strategies ranged through Acting, storytelling, and the use of everyday personae and 'banal presences' (see *Forced Entertainment*, 2000), paying particular attention to the points of transition between them as constitutive of the performance's overall effectiveness within a specific economy of intimate proximity to its audience.

An examination of these points exposes the work of desire (the desire to Act, to perform, to be another), negotiations and re-negotiations of the placing of self and other, and the dual status of performance and performer as both subject and object.



### 3.1 Becoming others: mimesis, emotion and task

For the purposes of this section, I wish to situate performer practice within a set of specific contexts, necessarily simplified in order to expose what I consider to be important divergences and distinctions between them. It is notable that performance seems to sit within a nest of multiple dualities (most, of course, artificial, but somehow convenient) and this can be, rather unfortunately, reflected in a tendency to polarisation and even opposition<sup>25</sup>. It is not my intention to perpetuate this here, but rather to discover how to write about a practice that strives somehow to 'live through' these dualities.

The first perceived duality is constructed as one of culture, and whether artist or companies situate themselves within popular or mainstream modes of production, with some possibility of commercial success, or whether they produce work that appears to be outside dominant cultural modes, thereby attracting smaller audiences, which on occasion may be comprised mostly of other practitioners who are similarly outside the mainstream. This is, of course, a generalisation, and it is rather more clearly defined here than in reality. I suspect, however, that even my undue clarity of definition is related more to a perception of practitioners' *intention* than to effect. It is the *effect* of certain approaches to performance that is undoubtedly polarised in this way. It remains that there are specific practices, approaches and concerns that place the theatrical in a realm of cultural production that is subject to more or less commodification. I should also add that, while both approaches imply some *conscious* self-positioning of practitioners within one or the other, they are also in part defined by those who ultimately take the most interest in them - there are a number of individuals and companies who fill more space in academic journals than they do in 'mainstream' cultural media (where writings about them would appear with characteristic 'health warnings', usually beginning with "You might think...").

The second duality is that of 'theatre' and 'performance'. Associated with the first ('theatre' is 'mainstream': 'performance' is 'academic/avant-garde'), but potentially more contentious, it is certainly bound up with what has come to be seen as a more or less

---

<sup>25</sup> See Philip Auslander's introduction to his 1997 collection, *From acting to performance*.



profound difference of approach (Schechner, 2002; Auslander, 1992 and 1997; Diamond, 1997, among others) that recognises a need for a specific and differentiating terminology. A duality is not (necessarily) an opposition; it can imply a mutual inclusivity, even a certain amount of interchangeability. This is certainly the case with theatre and performance, and this can make descriptive clarity very difficult. Theatre is considered a form of performance (in the sense that opera or dance are forms of performance), and what is called performance often incorporates elements of theatre or the theatrical. My feeling is that it is the work of the performer in practice that is somehow central to any differentiation between the two. In a way, this is self-evident, people doing something called performing being constitutive of both forms. What those people are perceived as doing, and how they think and talk about themselves doing it, also becomes a locus of differentiation.

This brings us back to Acting, and to performance as something that is at once 'Not-Acting', in Kirby's sense of just being or behaving, and also a kind of anti-Acting, that nevertheless operates with Acting and the theatrical as an explicit reference (Kirby, 1972). Acting is bound up with theatre, or with a certain understanding of it: theatre meaning plays, plays have characters, characters require actors to portray them. Acting forms the basis of theatrical representation; it is the work that converts writing, not so much into speech, but into *spoken thoughts* that are accompanied by readable emotions conveyed by the actor's voice and body. It is perhaps only relatively recently, in the aftermath of the artistic and cultural upheavals of the 1960s<sup>26</sup>, that such representational practices have been examined and interrogated, and, in the case of Acting, this has been a preoccupation of the academy, rather than the product-oriented mainstream and its fringes. This, of course, has brought us back to the first duality (I prefer this term - 'dualism' sounds too Manichaeian and oppositional), that of the mainstream and the academic.

The emergence of performance studies as an academic discipline in the 1980s has sponsored a repositioning of discussions of theatrical practice (Jackson, 1999). Within the academy in Britain, at least, this has meant a shift away from theatre as 'drama', located alongside and sometimes within, faculties of English (Literature). Drama-as-

---

<sup>26</sup> See my comments in section 1.3 of Chapter One of this thesis.



literature sees theatrical practice as a form of textual interpretation - readings of dramatic texts and their re-realisation within action and image - in other words, their 'staging'. Thinking, writing and doing *both* Acting and performance already have a great deal of the corporeal embedded in them, and physical training in various forms is always undertaken. It is, however, often subject to a separation from other work.

Phillip Zarrilli notes that, even after "the resurrection of the body" in Western performer training, there still remain vestiges of a mind-body dualism that sees the body as a separate locus and focus of performance technique (Zarrilli, 2002: 10-16 in particular). The study of theatre in the academy as described is encountered through a combination of its historical formations and understandings, and the branch of literature that has hitherto validated it - drama.

The professional training of actors is, or has been until recently, another matter. Taking place largely outside academia, in specialised technical schools, it utilises a terminology of 'craft' and concentrates on specific skills. It tends to feed directly into the mainstream, and therefore the aim is to produce individual and specialised actors who can place themselves at the disposal of the demands of the sector (theatre, film and television) in which they operate.

Within both drama as an academic discipline, and acting as a profession, a concept of Acting pervades that upholds notions of 'role' and 'character' (albeit in a variety of understandings) realised through the unitary and secure presence that is the ('trained') Actor.

For the purposes of this study, I have sought to clarify the distinction solely in terms of performer practice, of what it is the performers themselves *do*, and this coalesces in what can broadly be seen in terms of relationship with the (represented) world. As described above, the theatrical mode - characterised by Acting - would appear to be mimetic, adopting an approach to representation that seeks, through techniques that are fundamentally illusionist, to replace (albeit necessarily temporarily) real life with an edited, revised, authorised or explicitly fantastical version.

Performance, as mentioned above, has become a term that catches description of theatrical practices where creating an illusion, 'telling a story' and Acting, in the sense of



'playing a character' already delineated by the words given in a pre-written script, are partly or wholly absent. It also connotes, most importantly, some sense of a 'played-out' awareness of the act of representation itself, of its difficulty, even impossibility. To a great extent, what performance dramatises is the struggle to represent, and in so doing, disrupts the notion of 'presence' upon which much of the discourse of Acting rests. The fact the presence of performance-associated behaviour *always undermines the status of the theatrical* is worthy of note; I will return to this in Section 3.1.2 below.

As discussed briefly in Chapter One above, the domestic environment of *in situ*:'s work sponsored a less stylised performance mode than participants in the group's studio-based work had hitherto employed. It seemed that, as the environment had changed from a more or less specialised theatre space (a black box) to a commonplace, everyday one (an already-occupied house), the scale and intensity of behaviour needed to somehow be 'toned down'. This realisation led in turn to what has become a conscious experimentation with the bounds of both Acting and performance modalities within the process of each *in situ*: piece. The third and final section of this chapter is a detailed examination of the repercussions of this process.

In this section, I will explore some of the ways in which techniques and modalities of performer behaviour have been understood and used by contemporary theorists and practitioners. It is not my intention to provide any kind of overview *per se*, and I have deliberately selected those approaches that seem to me to have a direct bearing on the making and/or reception of the work of *in situ*:'s performers. In the first part, I will examine some modern and contemporary understandings of Acting, beginning with that of Michael Kirby, in his influential and still-useful article, *Acting and Not-Acting* (Kirby, 1972). In the second, I will look at modes broadly covered by Kirby's definition of 'Not-Acting', which in contemporary practice have come to be associated with new performance.



### 3.1.1 Acting: 'making an other of oneself' revisited

In the 1972 article, *Acting and Not-Acting*, Michael Kirby situates Acting at one end of a continuum that he breaks up into detailed phases. In this, the 'extreme' of Acting becomes 'Complex Acting', and this is in fact as much a situational phenomenon as one determined by an individual's behaviour alone:

"Acting becomes complex as more and more elements are incorporated into the pretense. ... [T]he performer may choose to act emotion (fear, let us say), physical characteristics (the person portrayed is old), place (there is a bright sun), and many other elements. Each of these could be performed in isolation, but when they are presented simultaneously or in close proximity to each other the acting becomes complex." (ibid., pp.45-6)

It is, however, the actual work of the performer that ultimately produces this 'complexity'. Kirby measures complexity by how much is going on, how much is asked of the actor, whether physically - as in the example he gives of Grotowski's non-realistic 'expressionist' acting style, or psychologically. He does not relate complexity to belief, that is, whether actor or spectator feel that what is being done is 'real', but rather to what he calls "the degree of representation" (ibid., p.46). This "degree of representation" can, for the performer themselves, only be how much detail, or how many different details, they incorporate into their performance. 'Complex Acting', degree zero is, presumably, the equivalent of 1:1 scale, of drawing the world, actual size.

Kirby goes on to make the point that:

"In almost all performances, we see the "real" person and also that which the actor is representing or pretending. The actor is visible within the character." (ibid., p.47)

Kirby's analysis here leads us to the edge of an understanding of Acting that is caught in a double bind: the actor's performance is given value according to how much of 'the real person' can be detected *in their portrayal of another*. This does not mean how far we can tell that the character is a simulation because the work of *pretence* is made visible; on the contrary, it indicates a desire to see some sort of amalgamation or merging take place, that the actor has not simply taken on the role, but has *put themselves into it*,



thereby exposing some level of his or her self that is not usually, socially seen. In other words, the role or character, far from concealing the actor through the skilled employment of technique, has somehow exposed his or her essence, 'the real person'. What is truly valorised in this, as a version of 'good acting', is a person's ability to show what is normally kept hidden, to give themselves away. When this occurs, or is perceived to occur, in traditional, dramatic practice I would include screen acting in this category - think of the standard responses to any mention of Bogart in *In a Lonely Place* (1950), or, perhaps a more well-worn example, Brando in Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1972). - the audience is absolved of the responsibility that would accompany such revelation in a private, personal relationship (see Ridout, 2006: 77). It does not 'identify' with the person portraying the character, in fact, it is the actor's 'exposure' that is seen to facilitate the audience's understanding *of the character*.

Somewhere in this must be the origin of the widely-held perception of acting as a 'risky business' - in terms of self-exposure, looking silly, appearing childish or undignified, perhaps with one's desire (or need) for attention exposed -, but the fear of humiliation frequently professed by the non-acting public (c.f. the discussion of audience participation in Chapter One above) is not described *exactly* in terms of a potentially exposed personal 'essence', but rather in incompetence, a lack of skill in simulation, mimesis, pretending. And what might be shown up by this lack of skill *but* this so-called essence of a person, an essence that is, crucially, not otherwise on display? The skilled actor is imagined by the audience as able to access and, more importantly, *use*, an otherwise-hidden self or self-part to lend complexity to a written character. In doing so, the actorly persona is in turn enriched by the character; the actor may be perceived as more versatile or more serious as a result of having exposed something to public scrutiny. The widespread notion that actors put themselves on the line, emerges from an idea of a real person that it is usually the work of representation to *conceal or disguise*. It is this, an illusion of reality far more powerful and seductive than the idea that a person has taken on or even been taken over by another, that is smuggled in under the disguise of Acting.

The incompetent actor, on the other hand, exposes only the fact of their separation from



the character; we hear the words as just that, not as fresh thoughts, spoken aloud. Their consciousness of a self cannot lead to the use of that self, only to an all-too-recognisable self-consciousness, which is communicable to the audience (in the sense that diseases are communicable). This is the source of embarrassment, what Nicholas Ridout terms "the predicament of the audience" (Ridout, 2006).

Psychological, or naturalistic Acting is the pervasive form. It is usually what is meant when acting is mentioned or discussed. The term 'naturalistic' refers to the performer's project of being as 'natural' as possible, in other words, the work of acting as disguising itself, its perceived aim of becoming invisible. As Joseph Roach, in his 1985 work, *The Player's Passion*, has noted, the practice of Acting has been bound up with scientific efforts to define the natural in human behavioural terms since the beginning of the Modern era. The implications of such a term create a whole set of difficulties which centre upon a certain invisibility, or even 'unmarked'-ness, for what is deemed natural cannot be seen as having been made, constructed, thought of, invented, crafted. It is taken for granted and somehow just there or just the way things are. The idea of 'nature' at any given time remains dependent upon the cultural to decide its meanings:

"If nature as we define it did not exist in the eighteenth century, the theater historian is bound to ask what Garrick's critics actually meant when they described his acting as natural." (Roach, 1985, p.14)

This is an important point from the perspective of this section, where what interests me is not only how Acting practices seek to produce naturalness, but the influence Acting has on 'natural' behaviour itself, particularly in the way in which we demonstrate and recognise emotional and self-states in others and in ourselves.

Psychological acting, from Stanislavsky onwards, has in particular sought ways of accessing the actor's own knowledge of how a person behaves, in order to simulate another person. This is internal work, although highly conscious, and is itself based on a 'scientific' experimental model of observation and repeatability. Stanislavsky's use of 'System' to describe his actor training in some way reflects this heritage of discovering



'nature', the better to replicate it. The actor observes herself, her feelings and behaviour. In Stanislavsky's 'affective memory' exercises, they 'remember themselves' in specific situations in order to observe, and then reproduce, particular responses deemed appropriate to the Acting task in hand (Stanislavsky, 1980; Strasberg, 1988; Carnicke, 2000). This can be seen as another trope of making an other of oneself (see Chapter One, above) inherent in all artistic practice. Here, the past of the self is observed, as on a screen, *as if it were another person*, but crucially, one with whom the actor enjoys a comprehensive and all-pervasive intimacy (the Unconscious notwithstanding...). Because of the known-ness of the material - it is after all, internally mined and not necessarily shared with anyone else - the actor is convinced by themselves; it is from this conviction that they seek to convince the spectator.

This approach, which was developed by Stanislavsky's students in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century to become 'The Method' and its variants, incurred particular criticism for its internal focus and potential loss of outward-directed communicative energy. Sanford Meisner (1905-1997) addressed this problem by seeking to privilege *the act* over thought and feeling (Krasner, 2000: 142-6). This practice of concretising the immediate environment and its micro-events, including the actor's bodily awareness, serves as a means of locating the work in the present - an injection of the real into what could become an interiorised imaginary exercise.

Ultimately, of course, its purpose was not to base performances around task (see below, Section 3.1.2), but to use tasks - in this case, detailed observation of the environment, and of others, in order to have real responses to them - to situate the performance in the actor's (and therefore the audience's) present, and thereby secure conviction.

The approaches discussed above are essentially strategies of representation. They strive towards an imitation of life, but cannot be truly mimetic; this is because the primary purpose of naturalistic Acting is to make writing sound like unpremeditated speech. In order to do this, the writing must first be read, interpreted and mined for potential emotional content, which must itself be translated into appropriate behavioural signals that are somehow deemed to go with the words. Acting is the work of showing this. Ordinary behaviour, like ordinary speech, is often as much concerned with concealing



emotions and self-states as showing them. A thoroughgoing mimetic representation of life and speech would contain a great deal of unreadable material. Most dramatic writing has already eliminated this in speech, otherwise there is simply too much noise and the writer's intentions are lost; the work of Acting is to eliminate it, and then to replace it with behaviour that is readily legible. Acting becomes a formalised, stylised and codified form of human behaviour that enhances writing by allowing it to be mediated through a human presence outside the reader.

When the onus of conviction, that is, of who must be convinced (first, or most), shifted from the audience to the actor, believing what you're doing became something of a dictum for actor training in the twentieth century. It added another kind of universalising support to the structure of this particular form of representation. Phillip Zarrilli (2002) offers succinct criticism of the implications of this in his general introduction to a collection of essays on acting, pointing out that to take this belief literally, to attempt to strip away its "metaphorical construction", is to conflate actor and character in yet another way:

"The language of 'believability' is problematic because in its propositional mode it appears to make truth claims which mask the referential, signifying quality of any linguistic statement about acting. It also masks its ideology of identity - the collapse of the 'person' of the performer into the role []. The implicit 'truth' claim in the proposition, 'you must believe in order to make me believe,' is mistakenly understood by both teacher and student alike as an apt description for 'the thing described' - acting." (Zarrilli, 2002, pp.9-10)

The dictum of "if you're convinced I'll be convinced" assumes, as Zarrilli notes, that the actor's version of an honest portrayal is consistent with the audience's. Otherwise, the idea of belief engendering belief in the other is a magical one, a naïve lying strategy. There remains, nevertheless, a question of what exactly can, or needs to, be believed.

The performer need not believe himself to be the character, but only has to be convinced that their *portrayal* is accurate, or, as it is sometimes termed, 'truthful'. This of course leads us to the same problem of whether the audience can recognise this.

An individual's private emotional responses are uniquely formed, embedded within a



personal 'idiom' constituted by their lived experience of their object relations (see Chapter Two above). To a great extent, social existence is constituted by a series of modifications and adaptations of these responses, precisely in order to elicit recognition and response from others. Yet much of social existence consists precisely in *not* showing, in hiding, circumventing or disguising, real inner states. It can be said that the ability to recognise the communicability or otherwise of one's own inner states *and transmit or withhold them accordingly* is in some sense constitutive of social being. To communicate is to codify (or have codified), and Acting in the naturalistic tradition depends upon recognisable shared codes that specifically enable behaviours to be classified as natural within the situation. It is this that renders acted scenarios so peculiarly legible, and in a way that real-life encounters with others are not.

A pursuit of truthful Acting, in the sense of portraying emotional responses readily recognisable to others, ignores this idiomatic nuancing and the concomitant specificity of subjective experience. In this respect in particular, naturalistic Acting is essentially *non-mimetic*. Even as the practice of Stanislavskyan Naturalism strives to engage with the 'ready made' play of identities and identifications inherent in human intra- and interaction, it must perforce constrain and fix it into a singular, recognisable (and therefore repeatable) set of *signs of emotion*. Inserting specific gestural indicators of real emotions rarely adds anything to the information - it isn't 'in the script', in the sense that it carries intentional significance within the drama. What such indicators do serve to do is convince the audience of the observational accuracy of the (necessarily more) highly codified aspects of the performance. The actor in the Chekhov play who pauses at length to seek and remove from his mouth a hair from his fur collar holds up the transmission of the play's text, but, in doing so, bolsters the illusion of a real person voicing their thoughts. Such a 'gest' is experienced as a break in the transmission of the play's *content* - it may cause a certain suspense to build up in the audience, who must wait for the next line while this piece of reality takes place. The actor's contrivance allows the world of material to interrupt the play-world's flow by transferring the audience's attention to it, and to his use of it. What he exposes is the *work* of acting, but it is virtuoso work; the audience applauds his ability to hold them rapt through a pause that should have been too long. In allowing them to see what he was doing - searching



for a hair and removing it - the audience members are *reassured* that this is intentional, part of the show. It becomes a 'gest' that is incorporated into the performance *through being shown*. Showing is the actor's work; it is not the same as being seen. In this naturalistic Acting is also non-mimetic. In so far as inner states and emotions are, in real life, not shown or deliberately communicated by individuals (see above), Acting cannot reproduce reality.

It is, however, true that a performer's person can be presented as a sort of 'readerly text' (see Eco, 1981, and Chapter One above) whereby the audience is left to 'code onto' them the emotion or inner state seemingly required by the context. The presentation of the face in particular as 'legible' in this way is the logic of the film close-up, and this was present even as naturalistic film Acting was beginning to coalesce as a practice in the early sound era. For the closing shot of *Queen Christina* (1933), director Rouben Mamoulian instructed Greta Garbo to make her face expressionless, a 'blank canvas' for the audience. Using their familiarity with the film, the conventions of historical romances, and the screen persona of Garbo, the audience could be left to 'read' the character's inner state. The code, if it is transmitted insistently enough, can even replace the need for the actor's work.

Naturalistic acting itself runs the risk of becoming a highly codified behaviour that is eventually no longer judged on its mimetic 'accuracy', but upon its resemblance to iterations of itself. In this, it is of course bent back upon its own intention to overturn a rigid, declamatory and histrionic 'code', through which the acting practices that preceded Stanislavsky's work were judged.

Naturalism evolved into a style which is now pervasive and has come to define Acting itself; its codes are now largely invisible, 'unmarked' (Phelan, 1993). If ideas of what constitutes appearing natural are themselves subject to change and manipulation (see Roach, 1985), then perhaps a practice seeking to mimic a found or observed naturalness might just as easily give it currency, or even eventually replace what we call natural behaviour with its own, replicable and recognisable, version. Television and commercial cinema are ubiquitous, part of Western industrialised humanity's 'natural' environment. The attempts of mass media to blur the perceived boundaries of fiction



and 'real-life' with docu-dramas and so-called 'reality TV' bear witness to the embeddedness of these emotion-codes. On TV, everyone behaves like an actor, but frequently *in order to be recognisable as a real person*.

A number of assumptions - about the nature of the 'self', the subject's position in language, the formation of memory etc. - are at work in the version of naturalistic Acting discussed above.

Theatrical Acting depends upon an anchored, stabilised persona, whose thoughts and behaviour are bounded by what is written and its interpretation. It provides us with a version of the human that is wholly readable, embedded in narrative, stable and 'storied'.

### **3.1.2 'Not-Acting': the task in hand, behaving and 'being ourselves'**

As has been noted elsewhere (Auslander, 1993, 1997; Lehmann, 2006), new performance cannot quite shake off theatre. It haunts it in the form of a constant referent, a kind of ancestral shade that is always at once evoked, warded-off, even propitiated, within new performance's practices. The use of theatrical studio spaces, rather than found sites, by many contemporary companies (Forced Entertainment, desperate optimists, Stan's Cafe etc) bears witness to this as an engagement, an actively-sought encounter. The site of this engagement, its critical dialogue, or critique itself, is also marked out in the person of the performer, what they are doing, how they should do it, how they might fail.

In breaking away from drama, in the sense of the theatrical realisation of play-texts, many practitioners have been able to separate out the strands of behaviour that have hitherto comprised the actor's relationship with the text (and, by extension, the directorial conception interpreting it), and subject them to a kind of dissociative recombination. Naturalism's assumed aim of mimesis, whether this is the imitation of 'real life', or the creation of a credible illusion that could pass for it (in space or time or fictional worlds), already called into question by Brechtian *Verfremdung* and the 'exposure of the device', is in new performance dissipated by the played-out disruptions and dispersals of the performer's identity.



To treat the mimetic representation of life/nature/reality as a more or less realisable outcome is to seek to obscure difference as an energising agent of relationship, indeed to obfuscate relationship itself, except as a tool of narrative progression. Relationship becomes teleological, it must have an End. It renders representation essentially *unproblematic*, free of the complexities generated by transience and instability. Such a position, one that grants unitary and stable identities in a fundamentally organised universe, where meaning can be retrieved by unravelling the right codes, uncovering certain secrets, gaining access to truths etc. has been held under suspicion, if not regarded as untenable, for decades. Performance's engagement with these issues is characterised in different ways by the work of the Wooster Group in the U.S. and Forced Entertainment in the U.K. These companies are well-known and, in some sense, canonical. I have chosen to illustrate what I perceive to be broadly discernible approaches that have a bearing or influence upon the work of *in situ*., rather than subjects of extensive comparative study. For this reason, I have in turn drawn upon secondary works (in particular Heathfield, 1997 and Auslander, 1997) to support my discussion.

Forced Entertainment have specifically worked within an economy of recognisable representational poverty in order to highlight its inevitable and pervasive falling short of its aims. In two performances of 1993, *Club of No Regrets* and *12 am: Wide Awake and Looking Down*, quoted by Adrian Heathfield in his unpublished PhD thesis of 1997 (which examines representation in new performance), a selected succession of texts, objects and situations is brought into play, repeated in different permutations, signifying and re-signifying, highlighting "...how performance itself agitates against and resists the representational structures in and through which it is perceived." (Heathfield, 1997: 17). Writing is not 'secreted' (as it is when committed to memory by actors, where, in its regurgitation, it attempts to disguise itself as speech) and the status of speech within the work is therefore shifted: "...enabling a presentation of speech as recitation, in other words as the *reading of memory*." (ibid., p.62) As in *in situ*.'s *Transmissions* piece (see Chapter One above), the performer is exposed as a scavenger among potential vehicles of expression - language, objects, scenes - , seeking a relation that can only at best be approximate:



"The object of the performer's quest remains unattained. The structure of the work encompasses a vast series of individual, material, linguistic, narrative and scenic failures; moments where the representational frameworks which the performers have staged collapse into the eventhood of the performance itself." (Heathfield, 1997, p.64)

Ultimately, then, "... the authority of these artefacts, as components of a wider structure of representation, is witnessed as failing." (ibid., p168)

Forced Entertainment's 1998 24-hour performance, *Who Can Sing a Song to Unfrighten Me?*, exploited this tension, exposing the menace of the trivial and the tedious in a relentless cycle of collapsing pantomime animals, dancing skeletons, aborted stories, confessions of personal fears and megalomaniac fantasising. Beginning and ending at midnight, the piece laid bare its content as *a means of getting through something* (the night, in this case), just as the stories of Boccaccio's *Decameron* are a means of getting through the enforced idleness of quarantine. Both boredom and Death being 'deathly', such forced entertainment always runs the risk of evoking that from which it purports to distract us.

Heathfield's detailed analysis identifies this aesthetic of recycling and redeployment as one of new performance's chief means of exposing both the inadequacy of representative structures and the unique position of performance to examine itself within such a critique. To keep trying, as the performers do in all the above-cited pieces, to represent themselves, others, reality, fiction, also bears witness to *the desire for a representation of things*, and *a desire to represent*.

I will return to this latter point in particular in the next section, but will add now that, for many people, acting, and the idea of themselves acting, is highly pleasurable, perhaps bound up with a cognate desire to partake of an order where meaning *is* recoverable and identity unitary and stable; where differences are forgotten.

*in situ*:'s performers are also audience members who experience Acting through its pervasive presence in numerous modes of cultural production. Most of them join the company out of an initial desire to 'try acting', and *in situ*:'s performance work seeks to interrogate what it might mean to do this as an untrained person. The work engages with



its participants' desire to 'act', and it is this which produces the individual performances as those performers work through the tasks in the piece. Part of the process in *in situ*'s work, therefore, embraces fundamental research into performance.

Philip Auslander, in his essay *Just be your self: logocentrism and différance in performance theory* (Auslander, 1997: 28-38), sets out a critique of the theatrical that goes beyond what he sees as Derrida's formulation of theatre's logocentrism as lying, not with the 'playwright', but with the very idea, what he refers to as a 'grounding concept', of 'the actor's self' (ibid., p.29). Auslander discusses the approaches to acting of Stanislavsky and Brecht (also Grotowski, but, as this has less bearing on *in situ*'s general approach, I will not discuss this part of his critique here) in this light, and finds all three to be dependent upon an actor's self that is, in various ways, always already wholly present, and from which performance proceeds. For Stanislavsky, the unitary self extends into an unconscious that is a storeroom of memories to be retrieved (and even stored/created to order) in the service of the actor's performance. It is, however, this very process, through which the self-imaging of memory is in fact *produced* (not retrieved), that constitutes both the performer and the performance:

"... the individuality of an actor's interpretation of a role derives from the difference between the actor's emotional repertoire and the character's. It now seems that the actor's emotional repertoire derives in turn from the process of acting itself, which necessitates the distortion of emotion memory. The play of difference which produces a particular characterization is produced by the play of difference that defines the acting process." (Auslander, 1997, p.32)

For Brecht, the actor's consciousness is privileged over the unconscious as the source of a kind of quasi-scientific observation of the character's motives, and conditioned responses to their socio-historical situation. In stepping out of character to offer commentary and to emphasise their difference and distance from the role, the actor must perforce inhabit yet another, that of authoritative commentator. To this extent it bears a strong resemblance to the omniscient authorial presence of the pre-Modernist novel, itself brought into being by the form through, and within which, it works:



"To guide the play's meaning properly, the actor must pretend to possess knowledge which, historically, she cannot possess. The persona that the Brechtian actor presents alongside of the character is a fictional creation." (ibid., p.33)

For Auslander, acting, within these two approaches (and within any broader application of them), does not, as it claims, draw upon the presence of the actor's self, but rather produces it. The actor of the Stanislavskyan Naturalism that pervades Western cultural perception of the practice produces in turn a persona that can be termed 'actorly'. It is through this that we recognise acting itself, before we begin to apply a judgement as to its mimetic competence (see my argument in Section 3.1.1 above). The distanced and socially-aware Brechtian performer invokes an authoritative presence that can never partake of the play of identificatory desire necessary to create and maintain the specifically theatrical form of illusion Brecht sought to undermine. In doing so, however, the fiction of the privileged observer, carrying with it the idea of The Solution, resolution, and another forgetting of differences, is smuggled in.

Contemporary performance's addressing of these issues often begins with the disruption of the relationship of actor and role/character. It is, after all, within this processual dynamic that the production of presence resides. The disruption of presence entails a rejection of fictional worlds, of a direct appeal to mimetic representation, drawing attention instead to the nature of the theatrical, to performance itself, to the task in hand. To this extent, I would argue that nearly all studio- and theatre-based new performance work is in some way site-specific. By this I mean that the space of performance and its associations and meanings are always themselves the subject of the work.

Performance that is task-based eschews the internal work of the actor in favour of the externally executed concretion of movement, gesture, text and object. It has its antecedents in other post-war artistic enterprises, particularly the development of so-called 'postmodern dance' (see Banes, 1987 for an early account). The focus on the moving human body as engaged in the undertaking of tasks obviated the seemingly long-held opposition of virtuosity and expression in modern dance (Banes, 1987: 1-20):

"NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and  
magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendancy



of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved." (Rainer, 1965, quoted in Banes, 1987, p.43, and Goulish, 2000a, p.9)

What appears to be a strategy of denial was part of an opening out of artistic endeavour, away from both commercialisation and the established forms sanctioned by the Academy. It was also, as Ramsay Burt has recently discussed in detail<sup>27</sup>, a way of delineating something like a personal artistic 'agenda' at a particular time, within a context of theory and philosophy (Burt, 2006: 84-5), and also as an expression of the centrality of bodily *presence*, beyond 'training' and virtuosity, which may have the potential to detract from the experience of embodiment as a sort of bottom line - "My body remains the enduring reality" (Rainer, 1974: 71, quoted by Burt, 2006: 86). . I quote this 'NO..' passage again because of its resonance with some of contemporary performance's stated projects, particularly in the 'live dynamics' and tasks of Forced Entertainment (Forced Entertainment, 2000). Acting, to be denied, and/or re-envisioned, must somehow be demonstrated and deconstructed. It becomes another task, whereby the performer has the job - 'is the guy who...' - speaks, reads, recites certain words, makes certain gestures, *as the piece requires*.

One of the uses of 'acting..' is to mean standing in, as in 'Acting Librarian', or 'Acting Executive Director', and this emphasises a certain aspect of the 'job', the idea of doing something *in place of*.

The late Ron Vawter of the Wooster Group spoke about 'standing in' for the audience (quoted below), acknowledging performance's other task of evoking absence through emphasising an understanding of presence that is activated through the transits of desire and identification, rather than structures of representation that perforce exclude them:

"With the audience I felt that any one of them could have taken my place, that I just happened to be the person who was standing there. So I felt very connected to the yearning, the spiritual yearning of the audience. I think audiences have great desires towards the spiritual and all they need is the

---

<sup>27</sup> Judson Dance Theater: *performative traces* (London: Routledge, 2006)



slightest excuse from the stage to open them up. So I try to find a place, between character and in front of the audience which would trigger spiritual or meditative experiences." (Ron Vawter, interviewed by Tim Etchells; Etchells, 1999, p.87)

*in situ*:'s practice is 'between acting and performance'. Performers stand in to complete the task, of the person who does something, or for the audience watching them, or for an Actor in whose place they have found themselves. In *Decameron*, *in situ*:'s performers played out their own desire to Act, for representation to 'work' and hold something still and stable ('in place') in a sort of magical transformation of reality. This was combined with an awareness of this as a task, an (impossible) understanding, embedded in the project of new performance.

### **3.2 Outline of the structure and action of *in situ*:'s *Decameron***

*Decameron* was an evening performance given in winter 2000 and again in early spring 2001, at a time of day when no natural light was available. This was exploited by having the audience enter a semi-darkened house, where they were immediately free to move around. The opening of the piece took the form of an installation, with performers placed, but not moving or making any sound, around the house. In one room, two performers stood gazing with a look of challenge or defiance into the semi-darkness, one holding an open photograph album, the other an open school register. All around them, hanging from ceiling by fine threads, were white seedling marker-tags, each inscribed with a person's name. In the bedroom, which was deliberately blacked out, a brief, dazzling illumination from a camera flashbulb revealed a woman, who appeared to be dead, or feigning death, lying on the bed in a velvet evening gown. An extract from Diamanda Galás' *Plague Mass* (Galás, 1991) was playing very loudly. The piece chosen (*Cris d'Aveugle*) has an overblown, Gothic quality, with Galás' distorted *bel canto* booming over tolling bells. From behind the door of the downstairs WC, immediately to the left of the front door, a loud male voice - actually recorded - could be heard declaiming the translation of Boccaccio's preface to *Decameron*, in which he gives what appears to be an eyewitness account of the horrors of the Black Death in



Florence.

After several minutes, both this and the music were stopped by the director - a signal to the performers to begin moving around, switching on lights and addressing the audience with invitations to assemble in the downstairs living room. The performers were served with glasses of champagne and photographed as a smiling group on the sofa by the photographer (who joined the group by using a remote control to take the picture; he had, of course, previously been photographing one of the performers in the bedroom during the opening installation sequence).

This sequence of events reversed the initiatory techniques of reassurance and 'looking after' the audience employed in earlier *in situ*: house performances. This sought to reflect Boccaccio's structure, whereby his frame story describes the retreat of a select group of young noblewomen and their male, self-appointed, guardians to the Tuscan countryside to escape the Black Death. Such a beginning was not so much giving the game away (as it would have been in *Inferno*, where the dynamic of the piece's diegetic proposition lay in the protagonists' efforts to hide the nature of their predicament) as establishing the underlying instability of the performance's position as both an attempt at staving off what is unsettling (the presence of Death) through entertainment, and a kind of squaring up to it by the struggling imagination.

In *in situ*:s *Decameron*, with the meta-narrative thus established, the performers begin to tell stories immediately after the photograph had been taken, inviting the audience to join them as they disperse once again around the house. This dispersal, with its direct address to the audience by performers adopting recognisable social personae, could be seen as the reintegration of an idea of 'audience reassurance' and the concomitant establishment of some sort of 'norm'. Through the opening sequence, the audience are made aware of the presence and nature of the repressed, but are also witness to the role of performance in both undertaking and exposing that repression. They know that the performers they see gathered on the sofa are, at some level, 'really' the personae of the death-haunted installation, post-repression. But the intimacy with the performers, the shared space, the fact that, as an audience, they cannot avoid getting somewhat *too close*



to the performers, means that they are never quite in a position to forget that the latter are also 'really' performing.

Performers had learnt their chosen stories as stories rather than as texts, that is, they tell the tales in their own words. As storytellers, a variety of strategies are used, from adopting what appears to be a very slight variant of their here and now persona, to an authoritative, lecturing style, or that of a cocaine-fuelled children's entertainer. Each performer has at least one tale, many use two or more. As the piece developed, the feasibility of getting through the stories was shown to be dependent upon factors such as their length, and the number and nature of other tasks and roles that fell to the person in question in the course of a performance.

If telling the stories is the central task of each performer, it must compete with other concerns, making it vulnerable to disruption, supplementation and sabotage by other material. Stories can be concretised, made to occupy space, by the making of images. This requires the requisitioning of a fellow-performer, sculpting them into a specific attitude, with appropriate physical gesture and facial expression, and then furnishing them with some object or item of clothing to embellish the picture. These items were often toys, homemade, or of fancy dress quality only, and they imparted a ludic element to scenes in which they appeared. Every performer becomes potential material for every other, each story having a sort of defining image that marks its occupation of the space, a sign that *the story was told here*, rather than took place here (or indeed was acted out here). A storyteller kidnaps another teller, thereby silencing and displacing them. They are made into an 'image', dressed and posed by the teller, their own story (or other task) disrupted, its persona cancelled.

Being made an image thus effects a kind of rupture in a performer's flow, providing an opportunity to shift out of one mode and into another. The likelihood of being abandoned once selected as an image is very high; the requisitioning storyteller, in absenting themselves to find an object, might easily be themselves requisitioned, or drawn into some other task or role. The image is then stranded, and, after a space of time, begins to disintegrate: limbs and facial muscles tire, the performer's sense of duty, or of the ridiculous, or of being attended to, deserts them and they extract themselves



from this imposed role. Frequently, such a rupture, followed by a moment of decay, elicits a more private-seeming persona, often talking softly, in an intimate register, something closer to an everyday, non-Acting self, re-made by the sudden redundancy of the performance.

This dynamic within *Decameron*, driven by tasks rather than dramatic narrative, functions as an 'accident machine', affording performers a number of routes into and out of differing performance personae, strategies and transitional states. It also means that the performance cannot depend for its cohesion on a uniform adherence to one mode or task or perspective, let alone one story and one teller. Once the action has moved on from the photograph on the sofa, the performance loses its ability to locate itself in a single fictive or historical space. In doing so, it becomes more emphatically situated in its 'real' environment, the lived space of the house in its encounter with the performers' desire to perform.

### **3.3 The disruption of Presence: moving between acting and performance in *Decameron***

As stated above (Section 3.1.2), an important part of *in situ*'s project is an engagement with an idea of Acting as desire, play and pleasure. It is something that a number of people want to try, to be good at, to imagine or see themselves doing. The actorly persona has an offstage existence that is dissociated from uncomfortable self-consciousness; even the off-duty actor is somehow imagined as not given to showing (and therefore transmitting) social discomfort. At least in Britain, such an individual seems to personify an idea of the 'theatrical', with the ability to act serving as a kind of magical and healthy identity disorder whereby a person has control of a stable of alternative personalities and their attendant ways of experiencing the world. This is by way of noting that Acting itself becomes an imagined practice whose presence pervades the contemporary world. It is commonplace, in films, on television, but as an area of human activity and endeavour is itself an object of fantasy. This means that many people want to try doing it, wonder what they would be like at it, what they would get from it, how it would change them, what they can discover about themselves.



The company seeks, through its practice, to investigate both the audience's *and* the performer's experience of performance. For the latter, this is very much an engagement with the idea of Acting, as well as the struggle to represent, to give accounts of the desire or need to do so, and to explore the uses of performance within and outside such an approach.

*Decameron* is a piece that coalesces around the idea of story-telling, the creation and performance of unitary narratives whose purpose is to represent the world as a place of ordered processes, trajectories and outcomes. The storytellers of the source material are seeking distraction from a disruption in the perceived order of the world (the presence of epidemic and death), and the transformation of events into a structured, sequential narrative has analogies with the self-presentation of the teller as the owner-organiser of the material. The construction of a storytelling persona is integral to the process of storytelling. The storyteller is a communicative position taken up by an individual as an intermediary between the audience and the story; he or she is able to move freely between being within the story and conveying it to their listeners. I will begin this section with a discussion of this as itself a performance of the play of identification and slippages which constitutes the activity of performance.

I will then go on to re-examine the use of acting in the context of *in situ*:'s *Decameron*, as an imagined form of performance activity that in turn produces a specific kind of relationship with both audience and material. This relationship can be described as 'theatrical', in that it appears to be aiming to satisfy the desire to perform within the recognised parameters of the predominant (or rather hegemonic) form i.e. naturalistic acting, and so fall into a mimetic relation with the forms of cultural production that utilise this style ('mainstream' theatre, cinema and television). I will explore *in situ*:'s use of this desire, and the effect of its pervasiveness as a phenomenon that eventually produces its own critique, as evinced by the 'performance' aspects of the company's work.

These aspects emerge as a direct result of the collapse of representation under the strain of its own relationship to the presence of the house environment. It is in the attempt to fictionalise the all-too-present quotidian spaces and assemblages of the house that the



performing persona is most exposed. Throughout the piece, there are points of such collapse for each performer, and it is these interstitial performances that come to form the contextual bedding for all the other performance positions taken up within the piece. This is further emphasised by the conditions under which they are produced, through engagement with other performers as they too transit through different identifications, performing positions and perspectives.

### **3.3.1 The Storyteller in a non-narrative performance**

Storytelling is an everyday performative form, usually characterised by a move away from the conventions of a conversation in which all participants may 'chip in' at any point. The storyteller 'takes the floor', thereby transforming interlocutors into an audience for the duration of the 'story'. This is a specific form of discourse that invokes something of an authoritarian ordering of the world. The 'story' can be an account of events from the lived experience of the speaker, a re-telling of someone else's experience, or an entirely fictional narrative, which may or may not derive from or even resemble 'real life', such as certain forms of joke. Whatever position the teller takes up in relation to the material, they are always its owner-organiser, taking on responsibility for its construction in the telling.

Because to be a storyteller is to assume listeners, it implies authority over material and audience. The storyteller must be someone to whom an audience can credibly give the attention accorded to one who organises and frames information (for whatever purpose). Even ludic or marginal figures - stand-up comedians and pub bores - partake of the authority of the storyteller, the latter working an assumption that to speak in a certain way gives the right to attention without interruption. In its 'public', social context, storytelling is a highly gendered performative mode. The construction of who speaks and who listens is embedded in numerous social rituals and relations in Western industrial societies (there is no tradition of the bride's speech at weddings, for example).

While ownership and organisation are important relational groundings in storytelling, for *in situ*'s performers they are themselves embedded in a fluid structure of perceptual



disclosure whereby the teller can speak themselves *from within* the story, allowing their listeners momentarily to take their place as (potential) owners and organisers of the narrative. This ability to move in and out of the material is another version of having authority over it, but in its disclosure of the possibilities of re-perception and re-telling, it 'releases' the story to its listeners, to be reconfigured in the performances of others.

*One person stays on the sofa. He spreads out, puts his feet up, extends an arm along the back, colonising the space the others have vacated. He announces in a clear, authoritative tone that he is about to tell a somewhat titillating tale of adulterous deception. He seems unconcerned that anyone should come and pay close attention, it is as if he will tell the story for his own amusement anyway. He closes his eyes and inhales deeply through his nose, as if taking in the air of an imagined morning.*

*A woman in a blue evening dress begins to cut a loaf of French bread in the kitchen; she is out of sight, but the L-shaped room is open, and she flinches as the crackling, rasping sound appears to delay the beginning of the man's story.*

In *Decameron*, performers used varying storytelling personae and positions, all forms derived from quotidian experience, and put into relationship with structured narratives. Their individual performances embodied differing strategies for 'taking on an authority' to match, and to convey, the ordered accounts of experience contained in Boccaccio's stories. Through this, as each performer provides a clear sequence of events as described, they present them through a specific and initially stabilised persona that 'runs' and 'owns' the tale.

In the main, performers adopted one of three distinct, but continuous, storytelling



persona-forms. The first was some version of the 'everyday persona', and the closest to Kirby's 'Not-Acting' in behaviour and appearance. These performers recounted their stories 'as themselves', i.e. in the way in which they would tell the same story to friends in a social situation, rather than necessarily to an audience in a performance. It is of course this strategy that exposes the story itself as a highly structured narrative that is 'outside everyday life' in both its substance and its relaying. Recounting such a narrative in this way creates a need for interpolations of 'ordinariness' - digressions, distractions, physical re-presencing in the form of habitual or passing gestures (hair patting, lint-picking, nail-biting, head scratching, staring into space etc. etc.). Even though the story is told in the performer's own words, its closed form creates a certain 'distance-in-presence' that the performer seeks to counteract by seeding the fictional narrative with missives from 'the real' contained within the teller themselves (see the comments in 2.1 above on the structures inherent in naturalistic acting).

The second persona-form is a variant on this, but one which embraces, rather than seeking to break down, the distancing sponsored by the closed form of the story structure as distinct from everyday discourse, and seeks a more 'organised' and less dispersed presence to convey it. This presence is therefore one that has pared away the tendency to the dispersal of engagement described above; it is a version of the storytelling subject that does not contaminate the story with their own relation to the world, psychical and embodied. As such, part of their performance is constituted by the attempt to not be subject to distractions, discomforts and extraneous thoughts, ideas and associations.

The third storytelling persona is a vocal and physical performance constructed from the everyday, but making no direct appeal or reference to it. One of the performers who used this dressed up in a frock coat and brocade waistcoat and carried an ornate cane. This use of costume and objects as indicators moves the performance into Kirby's category of 'Acting', although, strictly speaking, no other characterological signifiers are in place. This specialised storyteller-persona controls the narrative in its telling and aims to 'edit out' distractions from outside the story by associating it closely with a telling figure that becomes part of the story-world for the audience, if only by virtue of



being so sharply delineated as outside 'the ordinary'. It constitutes a form of embodiment, not of the tale, but rather of the idea of a specifically ordered form of narrative that is built upon the exclusion of all extraneous material. This is, of course, very close to the description of the dominant (at least in the zone of Euro-American cultural influence) style of Acting postulated in Section 3.2.1, whereby a highly codified behaviour seeks recognition by the presence of those 'codes', rather than the substance of its performance.

### **3.3.2 '(Naturalistic) Acting' and the desire for stable, 'storied' selves**

Can we always tell when someone is Acting? More than ever, there is a preponderance of docu-dramas, 'real-life' dramas, reality TV shows and dramatised reconstructions. Television advertisements have always used actors purporting to be 'members of the public'.

Conventional actor training, in the dominant style of Naturalism, aims to bring the actor's performance as close to 'real life' behaviour as possible (Hodge, 2000; Zarrilli, 2002), but nearly always within the confines of a learned script, narrative plot, and characterological description (or the assumption, or even implication, thereof). This involves a carefully-observed manipulation of the bodily events of speaking, moving and even perhaps (actually in many twentieth-century actor trainings, ideally) feeling.

*The woman in blue answers the telephone in the hall. She sits on the stairs, gently squeezing in beside an audience member. The voice on the other end says, quite audibly: "Tell me about when your children were ill and you couldn't leave the house". She describes a Christmas spent quarantined with her children, who had chicken pox, how they couldn't go out for a walk, or see any visitors.*



The markers of 'behaviour' - signals of emotional response and awareness of the surrounding environment, are removed, or fall away, in the process of simulation. For the most part (i.e. selectively), they have to be replaced, in order to produce a convincing portrayal of a human being saying something they've only just thought of and having emotional responses to a situation.

They are replaced by imitations of these phenomena that are codified, stripped of the complexity derived from the unknown and unpredictable so that they become 'clear', legible. When we 'know' someone is acting, we are responding both to the presence of these codified versions of our behaviours *and*, I suspect, to the *absence* of all the edited-out behavioural phenomena.

This is the recognition of what Richard Schechner has formulated as 'twice-performed behaviour', or 'restored behaviour', that is, something being done with a certain awareness that it is being done 'as a representation of itself' (see Schechner, 2002: 28-29 for a full description).

For the purposes of this study, I have characterised the work of Acting as fundamentally that of a stabilisation of the human presence. An actorly performance is one where the performing self is engaged in the attempt to render itself impervious to the shifting of identifications, distractions and attractions, in other words, the noise of being embodied in a world of others and material. The persona of the Actor, which is constituted by this striving, always already underlies any character or role, including (sometimes) the 'everyday persona' of the trained person.

Acting's stabilisation of the self-in-performance is analogous to the unified and organised image presented to the infant in the mirror (Lacan, 1996: 75-81), and its appeal could therefore in part rest upon the presentation of a legible, unified and stable self, capable of fulfilling a role in a structured narrative.

*A slight, fair man, wearing a black cocktail dress and carrying a SLR camera, comes into the room. He sees the woman in blue immediately; she is sitting, propped up on*



*pillows, speaking softly to someone down on the floor next to the bed. The man and the woman smile at each other. She stops talking, her smile doesn't fade. He continues to smile back. It is as if they have just fallen in love, or are remembering something, or are slowly recognising one another. They seem utterly lost in each other's gaze.*

Throughout *in situ*'s *Decameron*, performers may or may not engage in 'actorly' behaviour. Because one of the prime tasks in producing the performance is the telling of stories - highly structured and organised narratives with clear sequences of events and specific, often carefully-described protagonists - Acting to some or other degree might be employed as a performance strategy.

Indeed, certain performers chose to deliver their stories as 'acting', or rather through 'actorly' versions of themselves (see Section 3.1 above). Alternatively, they can 'play' their desire to act when they were requisitioned by another performer to form an image from a story. Such an image would be selected by each individual as showing a key moment in their tale, and was (re-)producible by using another performer, 'sculpting' them into an appropriate gesture and facial expression, placing them in a specific position in the house, dressing them up, and/or providing them with a suitable object (perhaps here, for once, we might use the word 'prop'...). Thus placed, performers were organised and condensed into a moment, and an action/reaction/emotion that is somehow 'ready-made'. It is purely gestural, actually pantomime, but in the context of *Decameron*, and *in situ*'s work in general, it stands for the theatrical. It was primarily from these positions, of an 'extreme' or even 'primitive' form of Acting (standing in for the naturalistic form only by association) that the performance's critique of it could emerge.

*A woman puts her head round the door of a couple of rooms, eventually finding a man who appears to be giving a sort of*



*late-night Open University lecture on the origins of the Black Death in Europe. Despite his flamboyant enthusiasm for the subject, he has no listeners at the moment. Obediently, he follows her into the bedroom where she pulls a nun's habit over his frilly shirt and OU bow-tie. Then she sits him on the edge of the bed and places a pair of trousers rather haphazardly on his head. She pulls his arms into an upraised gesture of surprise, and sculpts his face into a startled expression, the mouth an exaggerated 'O'. She appears to be finishing her story, just getting to the bit where the Mother Superior's double standards with regard to the Vow of Chastity are exposed, when she hears loud, heavy rock music coming from downstairs. She stops, seeming suddenly both anxious and annoyed. She runs out of the room, leaving the man as she had posed him. He remains just as he was for several minutes, his face slowly relaxing and his arms drooping. The woman in the blue dress comes in and makes him get into the bed and pretend to be asleep. As he does so, the trousers fall off his head.*

The requisitioned mannequins of *Decameron* take pleasure in being dressed up, manipulated, attended to. They make an effort to be good; they desire to perform and make manifest their own real or potential desire to partake in the cultural economy of Acting and the theatrical.

When a company like Forced Entertainment engages with the theatrical, it is through a similarly impoverished set of signifiers - the crappy costumes, the fake blood, the cardboard trees etc - , and the subject is the struggle of representation, a critique of the idea of illusion-through-mimesis. Forced Entertainment's performers retain their 'banal presences' and for the most part do not carry the hysteria of the desire for representation into their own performing bodies. Their pretending to... need only be evinced by



material indications - the tinned-spaghetti spilled guts, the cardboard notice saying "LIVING IN A DREAM WORLD". For *in situ*'s performers, however, the desire to Act is often present, and the performance must therefore risk an engagement with that desire itself. What constitutes the 'risk' is that which is attendant on the blurring of approach - new performance that is only sometimes critique.

In *Decameron*, the image-forming role provides one position in which performers are explicitly called upon to perform in a specific way, and to a specified end. Another is the summoning of a performer away from (what may be an 'actorly') storytelling or other performance position and into another task. For individual performers, the telephone ringing, a certain piece of music being played, the proximity of a particular object, could sponsor collapses and shifts of performance mode and/or identities. These moments laced the entire piece with interstices in which performers could 'fall into' (Bollas, 1992: 17) differing versions of the performing self, opening them for scrutiny or evasion.

### **3.3.3 Small tears in the fabric: gently rupturing performances**

*A man in a frock coat and waistcoat is describing in great detail a waxwork diorama of a Florentine street scene during a Plague. He appears to be visualising it within a black paper-covered box, held for him by an assistant. His speech is clipped, the diction precise. The performance is very controlled, until he makes a slight slip of the tongue, saying 'bobby' instead of 'body'. This precipitates a crisis. He begins to tremble and falls silent, enraged. He runs into a room off the landing, leaving the assistant alone, still holding the black box. After a few moments, the telephone rings in the hall downstairs.*

'Being-in-stories' (as their designatory image) was itself subject to a disruption of decay. Holding a pose, with a facial mask, perhaps on one leg, or brandishing a toy sword or a



flower, eventually becomes exhausting, or boring, or both. I will return to this shortly. The making of this image is always undertaken by storytellers, and always in everyday persona, a version of their non-performing selves. No-one could refuse to be requisitioned and everyone was therefore subject to its disturbance.

The effect of being made into an image could never be uniform across all performers, but rather depended upon what sort of performance the individual was engaged in when they were interrupted.

At the moment of being asked to come with the storyteller, the requisitioned performer would immediately drop what they were doing and pay attention to the request. This would be the case even if they were reluctant to comply (see above); leaving an audience to whom they were telling their own story might prove a particular wrench. For a performer in Acting mode, and dressed up in dandyish fashion in a frock coat, such a moment would occasion a sudden, disruptive, everyday persona response, rendering the stable, authoritative and secure persona suddenly fragile and vulnerable. This is the point upon which the performer's desire-for-Acting turns, as it is replaced by, and exposed as the product of, performance itself - an unstable succession of transitory self-states. Paradoxically, for such a performer, being moulded into an image, with pantomime accessories, allows him momentarily to recuperate some of the illusion of representational solidity afforded his performance by the Actor-storyteller persona. In the breaking down of the image, when he can no longer hold the pose, make the face, he is subject to bodily discomforts, distractions, boredom, the desire for the attention that has passed on somewhere else.

For performers working from a persona that was already closer to non-performing self, being made into an image creates an opportunity to play out a desire for Acting and theatre. Over-enthusiasm, exaggeration and an open relishing of the attention bestowed upon them signify this desire, revealing their eventual and inevitable abandonment as a return to a not-always-comfortable state of uncertainty. At such moments performers are between selves and between stories, those of the piece, and their own. They begin to speak softly in their own voices, to themselves, allowing anxieties, needs, random thoughts, memories, distractions and worries about the performance to emerge.



Snapping out of it frequently involves embarking on the organised narrative of their Boccaccio tale again, moving away to another room.

*A man is sprawled on a sofa-bed wearing a monk's habit. He looks as though he has collapsed in drunken laughter; the habit is hitched up around his thighs and he has a silly grin on his face. He stirs, as if coming round, and begins to whisper quietly. He is remembering a teaching colleague from a school in Africa. He used to drink beer with him. The bottles had an elephant on the label. The colleague became ill with a wasting disease, becoming so thin he was unrecognisable. He visited him in hospital shortly before he died.*

Without being pulled out of a performance by another, individuals would also shift from storytelling to a recounting of their own experiences or ideas, as suggested to them by their own encounter with the material of the piece. This aspect of a performance could be brought on by finishing one's own story, or by the collapse of the image-version of oneself from another person's tale. Most performers had differently-worked encounters between their own lives and the material of *Decameron*.

Performers engaging with such material could not be said to be Acting, although they may be adapting an everyday persona in some way. They are in some way giving an account of themselves, from within a specific self-state sponsored by the situation of being in the performance. Within this, performers negotiate relationships with each other, and with the audience. In some cases, the autobiographical (for want of a better word) material is mediated through a specific interaction with another performer.

*She comes downstairs and enters the sitting room; she has the register. He's sitting on the sofa listening to the music. It's impossibly loud, a mixture of punk and heavy metal, bruising. He turns it down, using the remote control, staring*



*at her. She sits at the table and calls out the names from the register. If he answers 'yes', she marks the box; sometimes he doesn't. It's up to him. He is looking directly at her the whole time. After the last name is called, he turns the music back up.*

*The register woman is sitting in the armchair, and a man wearing a floral dress is lying on the sofa. His eyes are closed and he is frowning, struggling to remember the details of an incident in his childhood. He is finding it difficult, partly because it was a long time ago, and partly because it still gives him the creeps. She asks him questions to help him clarify the image. She asks about the light, the time of day. He's trying to describe the dead rabbit slung over his father's shoulder on returning from a poaching expedition. She asks about the colour of its fur. Its eyes were open, shiny, and seemed to him to be fixed on him. He's afraid of the sight of dead animals, of animals that might be dead.*

These performances are interventions into the material of the piece from both within and outside its imaginary territory. They are derived both from the performers' resources as experiencers and imaginers of their own lives, *and* as individuals in a performance where they are subjects experienced by others.

Whether through a movement from pleasure to discomfort to withdrawal, or from unease to resignation to discomfort and withdrawal, these interstices, together with the image-making ones described above, become legible as trauma. For *in situ*:, in *Decameron*, these are the points where the performance re-encounters its subject, Death. The performers' desire for theatre, Acting, stability, predictability is faced down by their own strugglings-to-imagine - the distant past, being another, their own deaths. Deprived



of movement, and sculpted into absurd postures by their fellow-performers, their individual trajectories are momentarily halted, but also 'caught in the act' of dressing it up, disguising it, putting a brave face on it. When the ludic and comedic collapses, what is left is doubly charged - the losing team's fans, still in their flamboyant wigs, their outsize styrofoam headgear, tears running down painted faces, or Forced Entertainment's dead panto animals, or their grim hula dancers in tatty grass skirts. Performance as the subject experienced from the outside, from elsewhere in the room, elsewhere in the house. The point upon which Comedy and Tragedy turn: "When I die, it might be funny."<sup>28</sup>

*The performers slowly reassemble on the sofa. They appear exhausted, most are dishevelled, some are partially dressed in costumes - a monk's habit, a pirate's hat. Someone is wearing a big red tunic like the man in Van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait; she looks as though she has been crying.*

### **Concluding remarks**

The practice of *in situ*: always reflects an encounter of particular material (texts, spaces, objects) with particular performers. The performers' task is always to negotiate their own relationships to the material, and to each other. In doing this, different individual strategies are developed, and performers shift between forms of performance and varying self-states many times in the course of one performance. It is these transitory places, where one way of being in the performance is shed and another tried on, that 'open out' the piece, making spaces that can be occupied by the imagination - of performers and audience, or of the piece itself.

As we have seen in the account above, these 'passing places' are somehow out of the reach of narrative, and, as such, constitute important points from which to contemplate the implications of its presence and absence.

---

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Goulish, Goat Island Summer School, Lancaster, August 2006, *pers. comm.*



In the next chapter, I will explore further the effects of narrative and textual destabilisation. Here I will look at the nature of the interventions of voices and bodies in a text, and will seek to describe how performance is 'done on' such a text through the specific practices employed by *in situ*:



## Chapter Four

### Multiplying presence, evoking absence: texts and voices in *The Macbeth Project*

#### Introduction

Text and voice are central to the theatrical, to the drama, where the latter is understood as plays in performance, a literary form realised and staged in the service of the written word. While text is pivotal to the project of some contemporary performance practices, in particular those that seek to deconstruct the theatrical and struggle with the impossibility of representation, the voice within this context is correspondingly used as a vehicle for this deconstruction, stripped of actorly projection and the signs of technique (clarity, diction, breathing in the right places). The association of vocal performance with the representation of emotional states has undoubtedly contributed to the notable absence of vocal exploration within what are otherwise conspicuously risk-taking and exploratory practices. The use of the microphone constitutes a specific vocal practice for many companies, including Stan's Cafe, desperate optimists and Third Angel. This allows performers to address the audience in intimate tones, using a neutral, everyday voice, unembellished by the techniques normally required by actors in large spaces to convey closeness, warmth, informality. Paradoxically, the microphone creates a sense of intimacy even as it mediates the voice through technology.

In this chapter, I will first look at some specific contemporary performance practices relating to the use of text, using examples from three well-known (in the UK) and diverse companies. Approaches to text differ from group to group, and *in situ*'s work contains elements of, similarities and references to them all. In discussing *in situ*'s vocal practice, it is necessary to examine the Roy Hart tradition, and in particular the work of two of its teachers, Noah Pikes and Enrique Pardo, the latter in particular.

Pardo's understanding of 'emotion' in theatre is also bound up with vocal expression, but this is removed from the representational, illustrative, 'naturalistic' or psychological performance modes of naturalistic-influenced acting. In adapting Pardo's externalisation of emotion and the attendant use of the human voice in performance, *in situ*: has been



able to engage both with the limits of representation *pace* live-art- influenced performance, and the theatrical, via the use of vocal exploration.

The descriptive and critical material in this section of the chapter will provide a platform for the discussion of the company's practice that follows. Taking the 2000-2001 performance, *The Macbeth Project (TMP)*, I will reflect upon *in situ*:'s ongoing development of textual and vocal practices and the sort of performance it creates.

The first section is an exploration of approaches to text demonstrated by three companies that have already attracted a great deal of academic attention - Forced Entertainment, The Wooster Group, and Goat Island. In the second, I give an outline of the performance of *TMP*, with the basic operations and performer-tasks described. I have added a separate third sub-section on the history and practices of the Roy Hart Theatre (1969-1989) and the voice teachers that emerged from it, together with a brief examination of some recent writings on voice.

In the final section of the chapter, I reflect upon these practices in the light of *in situ*:'s *TMP* and its continued development into subsequent work.

#### **4.1 Text and voice: performing the body in language**

In this section I will give a brief outline of some approaches to text and voice in contemporary performance. The frame of reference is deliberately small as these are companies whose work I have experienced and who offer me examples of distinct textual and vocal practices. I am aware that they are not definitive or even exemplary of the full range of contemporary approaches, but thinking about and remembering their work in the context of remembering and writing about *in situ*:'s has allowed me to draw out certain features for discussion. In the first sub-section, I will look at textual presences in some of the work of Forced Entertainment, The Wooster Group, and Goat Island. While I am aware that these three companies have attracted a huge amount of critical attention<sup>29</sup> and have also themselves produced bodies of descriptive work on

---

<sup>29</sup> Single examples are: Helmer and Malzacher, 2004 (Forced Entertainment), Savran, 1988 (The Wooster Group), and issue numbers 32 and 35 of the Croatian performing arts magazine, *Frakcija* (2004), which were devoted to performances by Goat Island.



their own practice (for example Etchells, 1999 and Goulish, 2000a), it is not my primary intention to add substantively to this literature. It is, however, somehow pertinent to the discussion in hand that the work of these companies is, as I have already noted<sup>30</sup>, well-known. When I describe, and write through, the performances of *in situ*:, I know the work is unfamiliar to most. In appealing to aspects of the work of Forced Entertainment, The Woosters and Goat Island, I am not so much attempting artificially to create a context for *in situ*: within a community of practice, as placing *thinking* about the company's work into some sort of familiar territory. In the context of this project, I can only use my own understanding of, and encounter with, these other practices, to *think with*.

In writing a background to *in situ*: 's work with voice, I have necessarily been even more selective, as members of the company have worked within a specific lineage of vocal practice for several years. In the second part of this section, I will outline the broad approach to voice developed by The Roy Hart Theatre, and discuss the ways in which aspects of it have been carried forward into the present by teachers and practitioners associated with the original company, in particular Enrique Pardo. Pardo's company, *Pantheatre*, is based in Paris, and he has developed, and written about, a highly specific practice that uses a terminology of 'emotion' and 'imagination' to describe the 'giving of voice' in performance (Pardo, 1998 and 2003). I will also draw upon recent writings on voice and vocal culture, most notably those of Steven Connor (2000 and 2001). From these two points, I hope to provide a context for a discussion of the implications of *in situ*: 's practice in Section 4 of this chapter.

#### 4.1.1 Text: fragments of worlds, absences, openings

A text is most usually considered to be a more or less coherent collection of words or writings. In the historical context of theatre and performance, this has been a play (a dramatic text), or perhaps, later, a set of instructions that do not imply speech, but which are nevertheless performed, and this performance constitutes the piece (for example, Peter Handke's 1996 *The Hour When We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, a performance

---

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter Three, section 3.1.2



consisting of people crossing the stage in a series of failed meetings, near misses; for the most part *failures* of encounter). Beckett's two 1956 pieces, *Act Without Words I* and *II* are instruction texts of this sort (Beckett, 1990: 201-211).

It is worth repeating that there is no such thing as a 'performance text'. Performance is, if anything, what *is done on* a text; and this leaves the possibility that a performance itself can become a text for another, subsequent, performance. In 1999, Stan's Café made a performance that used Impact Theatre's 1981 piece, *The Carrier Frequency*, a collaboration with the novelist Russell Hoban, as its text. This is not the same as using the original text (i.e. the words used, either from writing or sound recording) to make another performance, a 'revival' of *The Carrier Frequency*. It is to treat the performance *event* as the text. As I write, *in situ*., under the direction of Richard Spaul, is preparing a piece based on Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film, *Psycho*. The text from which this performance will be derived must be considered to be the film itself, in its entirety, not just the screenplay, which represents the words spoken by the actors in the film.

The three performance companies I discuss in this outline embody for me differing uses of, and approaches to, text, particular affinities with different aspects of *in situ*.'s practice. If Forced Entertainment deal most cogently with what I have hitherto referred to as the struggle to represent, their texts, in their economy of recycling, bear this out. The Wooster Group's direct use of what are often canonical or even classical playtexts holds an important parallel with *in situ*.'s *TMP*, while Goat Island's carefully selected, but nevertheless frequently fragmented, curtailed or semi-erased, texts, forming an assemblage around a theme, resonates with *in situ*.'s use of widely-sourced material.

"Perhaps our first subject is this inadequacy of language. Its unsuitability for the job it has to do, its failure. And in this failure - by definition language is not and cannot express what it seeks to describe - an admission of the struggle in everyday life - to get blunt tools to do fine work ...  
" (Etchells, 1999, p.102)

For Forced Entertainment, one of the chief functions of text is to expose the lost cause of representation. Theirs are frequently texts that deal directly with the specific inadequacies of the *theatrical* text, the text that is itself built more to disguise than



'make present' a specific set of absences (place, character, narrative). In a series of pieces in the late 1990s - *Showtime* (1996), *Pleasure* (1997) and *Dirty Work* (1999) in particular, it was these written texts that were 'about' the work, rather than the other way round. *Showtime* begins with a performer apologising for the feebleness of the illusion about to be attempted - at the same time a kind of reassurance, as he appears to be a human bomb, with sticks of dynamite and a timing device taped around his body. *Dirty Work* is spare in its imagery, devoid of any doomed-to-fail attempts at illusion, any form of representation outside language. It is 'set' in a theatre, or a kind of outline of one, with red velvet curtains, lights, sparkle (tiny, intimate, the play of light on a diamante shoe buckle, a nest of fairy lights). The text describes one improbable scenario after another, a cumulative exposure of the inadequacy of representation, of failures of imagination and poverty of material. These texts both constitute the performance and comment upon it.

This quality of reversibility is emphasised by Tim Etchells when he reiterates the importance of found texts in the company's work. This is a praxis through which the inadequacy of language is embraced as a generative force, a scavenging of expressive forms and formulae that is constantly re-making and renegotiating the limits of those forms:

"What I am, in this text (now) at least, is no more (and no less) than the meeting-point of the language that flows into and out of me (these past years, months, days) - a switching station, a filtering and thieving machine, a space in which collisions take place." (ibid., pp.101-2)

It is this used language that is re-incorporated and re-configured in the writing that constitutes Forced Entertainment's texts. Improvisation has not generated the material in the same sense as in traditional theatre, where, performers in rehearsal speak as characters (who may have been described to them in outline, or who may already have some lines), and the aim to flesh out a kind of sketched outline of character, action and narrative. Within this, the work of writing is to edit and discard what may be regarded as noise - material deleterious to the perceived clarity of these features and to their dramatic development. Forced Entertainment's concept of improvisation is closer to



collection-building, curating, assembling fragments as they pass through performers and writer during the rehearsal process and outside it. The writing thus forms another specific location and locus for the flow of language, albeit one that also serves to *arrest* the flow, the better to note its presence.

The more evident the re-use, the better it conveys the struggle to represent. This is another reason for writing down, as spoken improvisation all too readily masquerades as originating with the speaker. To speak writing is to indulge in 'twice-behaved behaviour' (Schechner, 1985: 36; 2002: 28-29) *par excellence* and it is the goal of a 'naturalistic' theatre to obliterate all sense of this. In Forced Entertainment's work, it is almost as if the welter of clichés, catchphrases, quotations, platitudes and verbal emoticons is a way of *further debasing* language, a homing in on the places where it appears most worn out, threadbare, distressed. Yet the effect is not so much to reduce the association of spoken language with an articulation of private experience, as to reinvent it as an *active encounter* between individuals and the world through which they move. Through this action of difference, there occurs a literal articulation whereby external material is joined to experience, and called into meaning. Whether or not this call can be answered is almost beside the point - what is at stake is how we would judge the success, or even the adequacy, of the conversion of experience to language, and *vice versa*. Forced Entertainment's is a theatre that 'does not stake claims' (this phrase was part of a sort of manifesto that appeared on the company's website in the late 1990s). Perhaps more unsettling is the suggestion of performance playing out a *fear* of language, the suspicion that it is perhaps after all our own *lived experience* that is not adequate to *language*, in the same way that real life is found wanting beside theatre and the theatrical, being too small, too banal, too mediated, already used up:

"What is the language using us for?

I don't know. Have the words ever

Made anything of you, near a kind

Of truth you thought you were? Me

Neither. The words like albatrosses



Are only a doubtful touch towards  
My going and you lifting your hand

To speak to illustrate an observed  
Catastrophe. ..."

(From W.S. Graham: *What is the language using  
us for?* in Graham, 1979: 191-192)

The New York-based Wooster Group have used a variety of textual strategies across their performances, including found (in the sense discussed above) and devised/self-written material. Unlike Forced Entertainment (who have made one, very recent, exception - their 2005 adaptation of Sophie Calle's *Exquisite Pain* for a piece of the same name), the Wooster Group have also used extant, even canonical, texts, often plays. It is the group's use of this material that is most pertinent to the discussion in hand, and I will briefly examine aspects of this with particular reference to two performances: one is the much-discussed (Aronson, 1985; Savran, 1985 and 1988; Auslander, 1992 and 1997) *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)* of 1984, and the other the more recent *To You, the Birdie* (2002), a reading of Racine's *Phèdre*.

In the former, what was (initially) the central text was Arthur Miller's 1959 play, *The Crucible*, an account of a seventeenth-century witchcraft trial in a small settler community in Massachusetts, but also an allegory of the socio-political climate immediately preceding its production, the Communist witch-hunts of the McCarthy era in the United States. The implacable pursuit of left-wing sympathisers in this post-war period (roughly 1950-1965) extended beyond the political field, with writers, artists and performers bearing the brunt of a campaign against intellectuals and those engaged in cultural production.

A re-working of Racine's *Phèdre* was produced for the Wooster Group in 2002 by Paul Schmidt. It is a Classical text in almost every sense, a product of the eighteenth



century's engagement with the forms and cultural tropes of Ancient Greece and Rome, part of the late Enlightenment project of reclaiming and reincorporating what was imagined to be a rational, monumental and ordered pre-Christian past.

In many ways, the very presence of theatrical text - Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* - in *L.S.D.* came to overshadow its use (and eventual non-use), and the piece became 'about' that use:

"The dispute between Arthur Miller and the Wooster Group bears witness to the status of interpretation as an act that cannot be separated from the work itself. Thus, from now on, *L.S.D.* will be in part "about" Miller's withholding of rights for the *The Crucible* ..." (Savran, 1985: 109)

The work of interpretation is primarily the making of a text to be 'about' something. The Wooster Group's strategy is to *perform* this work, rather than work from an already-present 'interpretation' (effectively, a decision, in advance of performance, concerning what the piece is *about*). In this case, the 'text' was not the script of Miller's play alone, but the history and context of its production and reception: its status as a canonical work that is 'about' the political climate of its own place and time (the United States of the 1950s). In the case of *Birdie*, the rewritten text is bound into a matrix of bodily and temporal disciplines that form intertexts, as well as operations performed upon the play and its performance.

Philip Auslander, in his influential discussions of the political nature of the concept of theatrical presence (Auslander, 1993 and 1997) notes the Group's strategy of presencing the text (in *L.S.D.*) as an artefact as being instrumental in, and integral to, its deconstruction of presence:

"Reading's reading; a text's a text. The text, which is supposed to disappear, remained stubbornly, physically present, its pages cluttering the set. By asserting their dependence on text yet radically problematizing their relationship to it, the Wooster Group dissected the major structure of authority in traditional theatre." (Auslander, 1997, p.66)

The physical presence of the text also serves to signify the play as material, that is to say



its existence in the world as a cultural product, with all the received perceptions, expectations and interpretations that entails. The text is thereby expanded into a whole history of its performance, reception and interpretations, as well as, eventually, the Group's own skirmish with its author. *The Crucible* was embedded in a matrix of other textual material, much of it drawn from the counterculture of the 1960s, notably Timothy Leary's writings and engagements with the media on the use of hallucinogenic drugs, particularly LSD. Also included was the text of an interview with the Learys' babysitter, heard only through headphones by one actor (Nancy Reilly), and repeated in fragments only by her. As the wrangling with Miller progressed, the text from *The Crucible* was gradually mangled out of recognition, interdicted (at one point a buzzer was sounded every time any action or words from the play were accidentally performed by the actors) and replaced (Michael Kirby was brought in to write a completely different text which referred only obliquely to Miller's).

In *Birdie*, the text is not physically present in the same way, but is nevertheless subject to a number of strategies that do not allow it to settle into a locus of authoritative presence. The piece is organised around and through a game of badminton, which is played throughout its duration by the male actors, the rules and refereeing of which are explained in detail, breaking up the text and action of the play. Also, a film of Martha Graham's dance version of *Phaedra* is playing on overhead monitors, visible only to those onstage. From time to time, individual performers imitate the physical postures, actions and gestures of Graham and her dancers. Like Nancy Reilly's repeating of fragments of the babysitter interview in *L.S.D.*, this is the audience's only knowledge of this material, which is mediated through the performers on a highly selective basis. Both these strategies serve to place Racine's *Phèdre* into a cultural-historical context as an artefact of both its production and subsequent reception. The contemporary eighteenth-century game of badminton (the piece's title references the phrase used by players when serving the shuttlecock to their opponent) is called into play both as a 'live dynamic' and the imposition of a bodily discipline that is both historically specific and reiterable within the contemporary. This enables the group to use the text in a quasi-Foucauldian investigation of the life of the body as a carrier of cultural forms. Ways of exercising, showing emotion, social display and signalling are all recorded through



language, in texts, but embedded in bodies as a means of transmission and dissemination.

It is this dimension of the body as a bearer of social texts that forms the basis for much of the work of the Los Angeles-based artist Catherine Sullivan, who creates video works using sequences of specific gestures and tasks derived from specific texts of bodily prescription and social-symbolic definition. Her use of nineteenth-century US etiquette books and instructions on table manners and general deportment afforded part of the gestural vocabulary for a piece based on the encounter between Helen Keller and her teacher (Sundell, 2003). In *The Chittendens* (2005), she mines the signifying physicalities embedded within American film, television and commercial culture in their role as national self-descriptors. Imposed upon this is the text (or, more properly the ideas and descriptive vocabulary) of the early twentieth-century Norwegian-American economist Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1973). This is an investigation into, and a theorisation of, the socio-cultural effects of capitalism in terms of personal, familial and class display, emulation, restraint and consumption. Using 'characters' from Veblen's work ('Predatory Barbarian', 'Peaceable Savage', 'Leisure Class Male'), restrictive costumes and sharply defined sequences of movements, Sullivan's piece builds a dual set of body-texts that are reflective of both socio-cultural environments and a specific commentary upon them (Secession, 2005).

A similarly painstaking envisioning of the body as a site of remembering, re-enactment, demonstration and conversion informs the work of the collaborative performance company Goat Island. Making work over an extended period - two to three years per production - group members combine and re-combine material that is devised, found and written, in a complex and proliferative play of collaborative response. Eschewing narrative, structural and even architectural components are nevertheless strongly presenced in the temporal and spatial dimensions: notions of grids, repetition (again), and, in particular, numerical and mathematical patterning are used to build the work into a landscape that coheres through its own logic. Again, the notion of a corporeal textual practice is present. Private and interpersonal experiences, such as the jointly-undertaken group pilgrimage in Ireland at the start of work leading to the 1994 piece, *How dear to*



*me the hour when daylight dies*, recalled images and specific encounters are re-worked into both writing and dance - gestures, actions, meditative sequences. Within this, a text can be manifest as words and movement, simultaneously, or at different points in the performance.

Texts used and drawn upon in Goat Island productions are derived from a number of sources. Members of the group may use specific writing exercises to produce material that starts from a particular interest, question or premise, for example, the question: 'How do you repair?' that was the starting point for work on 2004's double piece, *When will the September roses bloom?/Last night was only a comedy*. As work progresses, individuals bring in further associative material, from extant texts - poetry, philosophy, topography etc., and 'found' material, such as repair manuals or reading primers, pieces and fragments written or overheard. This material is in turn subjected to processes of transferral between performers through deliberate teaching, imitation and response. Creative response is an extremely important driving practice in Goat Island's work. It is a form of critical creative practice whereby the work of one performer or set of performers informs and becomes the basis for work by another. Matthew Goulish, one of the company's founder members, performers and teachers, defines creative response as something that "... would not have been created in the absence of the piece it is responding to." (Goat Island, [n.d.], p.26)

The practice of creative response acts to place all the diverse textual, corporeal, spatial and temporal material of a Goat Island performance within an economy of interlocking dependencies. Texts serve as 'openings out' into imaginary and thought-worlds, being brought to bear upon the thematic meditation in hand (for example poisoning, repair, or, in the current [2006-07] work, 'lastness'). Whatever is already in the world can thereby be brought into new relationships that invoke differently configured meanings and readings.

Goat Island's textual practice is perspectival: texts are places or sites of habitation *from within* which performers speak as figures in a landscape of borderlines, a *fragmentarium* - an opportunistic coining that seeks to express a notion of a surrounding environment, a sensorium - but one which is made up of details in motion, a play of



proximities.

## 4.2 Voice: embodiment and imagination

In this section I will briefly discuss the status and use of voice in contemporary performance practices, specifically those whose interests are more towards the deconstruction or interrogation of the theatrical, before moving on to examine specific approaches to the vocal, most notably those of former members of the Roy Hart Theatre of the 1960s and early 70s onwards, and the ideas articulated by the cultural historian Steven Connor in his recent work on ventriloquism (Connor, 2000 and 2001). It is from these perspectives that *in situ*'s vocal work derives; from the former as a long-term project, and the latter a particular influence on the later stages of the development of *TMP*.

While the company's textual practice in performance entertains a variety of techniques, propositions and approaches, many of which are reflected in contemporary performance practices, examples of which I have examined in Section 4.1 above, I have been unable to find corresponding affinities with *in situ*'s approach to the use of voice within similar performance environments. In Section 4.2.1 below, I will look at what I believe to be some of the reasons for this, with the proviso that I write from a perspective that reflects my focus upon live-art-based performance, rather than practices which are closer to what is usually understood as theatre. The tensions of antecedence, association and reaction resonate through every juxtaposition of these two terms, within the work in hand and outside it (see my introduction to Chapter 3 above, where the question surfaces over the issues of 'Acting' and not-Acting'), but it appears that there is a notable reticence on the matter of the use of the human voice in some contemporary performance. In her editorial for the March 2003 issue of *Performance Research*, entitled *Voices*, Claire MacDonald writes of "...a revival of interest, both critical and creative, in sound and/as performance." and that "... sound has moved towards the centre of art practice ...", (ibid., p.1). Both of these statements would seem to belie some sort of preceding dormancy of interest, and it is notable that the subject under discussion, despite the issue's title (and, indeed, the title of the editorial: *In Viva Voce*) is taken as



the more encompassing field of sound itself, in which the human voice must situate itself.

It is partly in the absence of useful comparative or associative material that the following two sections explore influences upon *in situ*:'s vocal practice in general, and that in *TMP* in particular.

#### **4.2.1 Lost voices: the mediated intimacy of the vocal in new performance**

If the modern era found the body to have been leached out<sup>31</sup> of Western classical theatre<sup>32</sup>, especially in Britain and the United States, this form in all its manifestations has never been associated with a concomitant neglect of the voice. How could it, when it is invested in language (the drama), and its prime purpose is seen to be the conveyance of the playwright's text to the audience?

Voice training is central to the stage actor's work, with its need for absolute clarity - of diction, the communication of character, and of emotion - and also for what is known as projection, whereby the voice can be carried to the back of large auditoria without the actor actually shouting, or even appearing to raise their voice. Breathing, and the situating of the breath to produce resonance, was seen as the key to speaking verse, to doing justice to Shakespeare's iambic pentameter without clumsy mid-line gasps or barely-audible finishes (Berry, 1973).

Just as other aspects of training resulted in an actorly demeanour in encountering dramatic text in performance, so too did (does) voice-training create an actorly mode of speaking, an actor's voice. This has a produced, self-aware quality; everything the actor says sounds as if it has been written, sounds meaningful, or as if meaning should be thrust upon it. Strangely, cinema and television, media which at least purport to not

---

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps I am thinking archaeologically here: the acids in the soil of the Sutton Hoo ship burial dissolved the organic matter of both ship (wood) and incumbent (a seventh-century East Anglian king), leaving only the boatwright's rivets and the spectacular hardware of personal adornment and weaponry... The corpse itself is as central to internment as the living body is to live performance. While archaeology cannot retrieve the interred corpse, only infer its placing and the individual's significance from objects (see Chapter Five), the theatrical investigations of the postwar period have gone some way to reinstating the place of the body in live performance.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Zarrilli's introduction to 'Part II (Re)Considering the Body and Training', in his edited volume, *Acting (Re)Considered*, (London: Routledge, 2002).



require any kind of projection (of sonority, or emotionality) have not heralded the demise of this phenomenon, but have rather found new uses for it. The resonant, coherent, above all *controlled* tones of the trained actor's voice are still employed wherever ambiguity is deemed undesirable, wherever the message must be clear; it is the art of advertising that highlights most readily the authoritarian nature of the perfectly modulated, aestheticised speaking voice. The acting voice is certain that it wants to be heard, and knows what it is saying.

It seems to me that herein lies the main reason for an eschewal of interest in the human voice *per se* in performance. Without character, and therefore, it would seem, without the expressionist need to convey particular emotions, the voice too must no longer signify a particular kind of behaviour. It must be returned to the banal presence of the non-Acting person (who is nevertheless performing), more exposed, more embarrassed, more fragile, more mortal.

The archetypal voice here is amplified by microphone, or is otherwise, perhaps, inaudible. Tim Etchells points out that the use of the microphone is part of an attempt to be closer to the audience, it is somehow more intimate, because the voice does not have to be cleaned up, clarified, projected. The audience hears the performer's voice mediated only by amplification, not by special skills or training. The microphone, far from being a dehumanising mechanisation of the voice, allows it to be heard in all its human frailty, without technique. Steven Connor takes note of this, with reference to Barthes' notion of 'the grain of the voice' (Barthes, 1977):

"The microphone makes audible and expressive a whole range of organic vocal sounds which are edited out in ordinary listening; the liquidity of the saliva, the hissings and tiny shudders of the breath, the clicking of the tongue and teeth, and popping of the lips. Such a voice promises the odours, textures and warmth of another body. These sounds are not merely the signs or reminders of bodies in close proximity to our own; they appear to enact the voice's power to exude other sensory forms. Most of all, perhaps, the imaginary closeness of such voices suggests to us that they could be our own; ..." (Connor, 2000, p.38)

Like the calling into meaning of found texts, scraps of language from postmodernity's



obsession with communication, the voice is here called into presence, in the sense of presence as at least the potential for contact. It is this potential, rather than the idea of contact, or recognition, or even identification that new performance seeks to interrogate in its continued engagement with liveness. The quiet-but-amplified voice becomes a locus of desire; the microphone allows the audience to observe (i.e. listen to) its own listening.

In the editorial to the above-mentioned issue of *Performance Research*, Claire MacDonald emphasises plurality of voices, 'polyphony', as one of the preoccupations of contemporary performance and art practice. This is of course consistent with the emphasis on the unproduced, embodied (the more so through the audibility of its 'grain') voice discussed above. This is also an interest in the human voice as part of, as well as producer of, soundscapes, auditory environments through which we experience the world. MacDonald notes that this project is necessarily bound up with technology; even old technologies of analogue recording, being "... reawakened as materials, [that] continue to have a conceptual relationship to current technologies" (MacDonald, 2003: 3) can evoke, for example, the passage of time and its distancing, in much the same way as the microphone draws attention to the detail of individual voice production.

Performance itself has its own history, and MacDonald goes on to describe Enrique Pardo's essay, *Figuring out the Voice*, as: "... connecting generations of experimental work around voice in which ideas from one era become reshaped within the context of later politics and changed locations." (ibid., p.4). As I would see *in situ*'s work as a part of this re-shaping, it is to Pardo's work, and its origins in the Roy Hart Theatre of the 1960s and early 70s that I now turn.

#### **4.2.2 From the Roy Hart Theatre: 'The Whole Voice' and 'Choreographic Theatre'**

It is only relatively recently that former members of the Roy Hart Theatre (c.1965-c.1982) have become engaged with the documentation of its history, context and practices (Pikes, 2004; Pardo, 2003). This is perhaps surprising, given the coherence of



the approach, the group's commitment to it, and the number of those individuals who continue to teach and practice within their own developments of it today. To some extent, of course, it is the dynamism and effort involved in this very continuity that has delayed (and ultimately, no doubt, furnished the impetus for) the documentation of its own antecedent: Noah Pikes and Enrique Pardo are among the most artistically active former RHT members, and have each evolved unique and particular approaches to voice work, through teaching, research and performance.

Before outlining aspects of Pikes' and Pardo's work, I will give a very brief sketch of the history of the Roy Hart Theatre.<sup>33</sup>

Although, as Pardo notes in the 2003 essay referred to above, the Roy Hart Theatre was situated within the cultural climate of 'Dionysiac' exploration that characterised experimental artistic practices of the 1960s and 70s (see Chapter One above), it was also rooted in what he terms "...the crossroads of German romantic humanism and the enthusiastic first waves of psychoanalytic explanations..." (Pardo, 2003: 41). This refers to the work of Alfred Wolfsohn, a German Jewish refugee who arrived in England in 1938. Wolfsohn was a trained musician and a singing teacher, whose approach to the voice had developed out of his experiences in the trenches of the First World War. It was there, crawling among the bodies of dead and dying comrades, that his relationship with, and understanding of, the human voice was altered. The experience was traumatic, Wolfsohn later described the sounds he heard as "... penetrating me deeper and deeper, poisoning my whole being..." (Wolfsohn, unpublished MS 1938, quoted in Pikes, 2004: 37). His subsequent exploration of the voice began as a sort of cure, a re-presencing of himself at the site of his trauma - the event which one witnesses in one's absence (Caruth, 1996). Working with his own and his students' voices, Wolfsohn embarked upon a project of exploration that was essentially therapeutic, but which also served to radicalise an already conventionally sophisticated and accomplished approach to singing and vocal musicality. He was able to continue this work after his relocation to London, and, by the late 1940s, had assembled a group of prodigiously gifted students,

---

<sup>33</sup>An extensive, detailed, and necessarily highly personal/autobiographical, account of the early years, up to Hart's death in 1975, can be found in Pikes 2004.



one of whom was Roy Hart, a young RADA-trained actor from South Africa.

Wolfsohn's discovery of the voice as an instrument of internal expressivity, its repression bound up with the repression of the corporeal and psychic in (what was seen as) the normalising and controlling project of Western social forces, chimed with an emerging ethos of challenge and liberation that began within the arts.

On Wolfsohn's death in 1962, Hart assumed leadership of the work, gradually combining the therapeutic and personally expressive with applications to musical and theatrical performance that presenced the person, rather than the product of their training. The 'ideal' of the eight-octave voice, which had attracted some media and professional attention at the time, with men using the soprano range and women the bass and baritone, was married to an uninhibited repertoire of extra- and para-musical vocal soundings, from growls and grunts to hisses and 'peeps' (very high-pitched, usually single-beat, squeaks).

Hart's classes took the form of group meetings in which attention would focus, sometimes for quite long periods, on single individuals. The voice was the dominant expressive instrument of internal conflicts, desires, and self-states. Brought into relation with a newly-liberated and sexualised body, the exploration of individual voices in this context was itself the theatricalisation of a sort of therapy, akin to those demonstrations of hysteria and 'cure' at the primal scene of psychoanalysis. Despite this, Hart's project was a more or less democratic one. There were no non-participants, no (permanent) outside observers; all group members had 'singing lessons' in the presence of others. Individuals used voice to externalise and embody ranges of 'characters' and emotional states that could later be worked on in a theatrical context. It is in this area, the binding of the personally exploratory/therapeutic to an externalising process driven by the active imagination that Hart's continuation of Wolfsohn's work created the most impact. Drawing on myth and archetypal imagery, the group (then called the Roy Hart Speakers/Singers) began to work with Greek tragedy, performing *The Bacchae* at the World Theatre Festival in Nancy, France in 1969 (Pikes, 2004: 87). The positive reception of this piece and subsequent works, in France, and the concomitant lukewarm and/or baffled response offered in Britain, was influential upon Hart's decision, in 1973,



to relocate the group there. The move itself took place the following year, to Malérargues, a crumbling manor in the Cevennes region which had served, perhaps fittingly, as a headquarters of the Resistance during the Second World War. The Roy Hart Theatre combined their continued vocal researches with giving performances (locally and touring) and teaching within the surrounding communities, where most members also worked in manual jobs to raise money for refurbishment of their premises.

In May 1975, en route to a festival performance in Spain, Roy Hart, his wife Dorothy, and another group member, Vivienne Young, were killed in a car crash. The members of the Roy Hart Theatre, at least partially in defiance of accusations of guru-following, decided to continue. The Roy Hart Centre for Voice at Malérargues is today a thriving artistic community, hosting and running a workshop, research and conference programme throughout the year. It is also still home to a number of the original group.

I have given this brief historical synopsis because it not only gives some (I hope) relevant background to the outlines of the work of Noah Pikes and Enrique Pardo to follow, but because it draws me into a frame of mind where I can place the practice of *in situ*: within a context and into something that can be said to be a *lineage*. The company's connections to these particular teachers is not abstracted from documentation, but concrete, direct and active. One consequence of this is to reinforce *in situ*:'s interest in the voice as perhaps somewhat unseemly in the context of new performance practice, because the group is able to draw upon such a culturally and historically specific body of work. When I write this section, I am saying that this part of the company's work *comes from* somewhere, stands apart from the curatorial influence-gathering, accidental discoveries and re-discoveries, echoes, *hommages* and reinterpretations (conscious and unconscious) of the past and the contemporary that are constantly in play within any artistic practice. *in situ*: is not an heir or even an inheritor of the Roy Hart Theatre, but without its work and that of its teachers, an important, and I think defining, aspect of *in situ*:'s own work would not exist.

Since the 1980s, Noah Pikes has taken forward his RHT work through a project he calls 'The Whole Voice'. This 'whole' is inclusive and polyphonic, not a totalising monolith



(see Jay Livernois' preface to Pikes 2004). For Pikes, the voice holds an all but infinite range of potential expressivity, which is outside the concerns of aesthetics or therapy. Envisaged as a sort of proliferating splay of loose oppositions (gods:animal, nature:culture, spirit:body, feeling:reason etc. etc.), the voice is worked upon as a primarily corporeal phenomenon, its source in the body. The aim of the work is to make available to the subject as full a range of vocal sound as possible, readily accessible and usable for emotional and artistic expression and further exploration. A newly-discovered sound, a place in the voice, can be played with, which often involves stretching that sound until it changes into something altogether different; this way its boundaries can be identified, and then, through the images, suggestions and associations it produces in the listeners' imagination, described - but, crucially, not defined. Once found, and re-found, voices can proliferate through similarity, imaginative affinity and/or opposition. Heavily influenced by practices of Analytical Psychology (Jungian Analysis), this voice work uses the subject's internal imaginal vocabulary as a portal to a corporeal-vocal expressive dimension. Simple Archetypal characters ('giant', 'witch', 'hero', 'queen' etc.) are frequently brought into play as points of contact, departure and expansion. In this, the work has an affinity with the highly-physicalised practices of European theatre's masking traditions, where stock characters have developed from particular body postures and gaits, facial contortions and prosthetics in the form of masks and costumes.<sup>34</sup>

In Pikes' work, in particular, notions of music and its structures, or language and its meaning, in other words, the strictly interpretive, can be experienced as secondary to a project of accessing and assimilating, or more appropriately, *incorporating*, the individual's vocal-imaginal landscape into their expressive repertoire. This also allows the voice work to concentrate on aspects of the 'non-human', a term which is not restricted to simple imitation of 'animal' voices, but which is intended to include humans in the sound-kingdom of animals. This itself opens into an area of unclear or even wholly absent meanings, where sounding is cut loose from saying, bringing nothing into the world but voice itself, that denotes the presence of the body (see again Connor, 2000: 38, quoted above).

---

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Rudlin, 1994 for a detailed account of the core masks of Commedia dell'Arte.



For Enrique Pardo, whose Paris-based company, *Pantheatre* (co-directed with Linda Wise) also teaches 'extended voice' techniques in the Wolfsohn/Hart tradition, the emphasis and interest is on the application of the voice to language and the recovery/discovery of textual meanings. In his 2003 essay, 'Figuring Out the Voice: Object, Subject, Project' (Pardo, 2003), Pardo describes his project of 'freeing the voice *for* language, *from* language' (ibid. 44):

" The aim is to articulate the emotional voice, to include the plurality and the emotional impact of the eight-octave voice in a physical theatre that composes with image and language. We try to 'figure it out' and, in a sense, give the eight-octave voice a voice, one that does not swallow image, in the manner of the authorial voice of a text that seeks to rule image and interpretation in literary theatre..." (Pardo, 2003, p.45)

It is Pardo's interpretation of the constitution of emotion in theatre that is crucial here, and I would see this as a key trope, if not *the* key trope, within his work. The emotional here does not have its origin in the personal, internal and individually/idiomatically coherent world of the performer, expressed in legible form and read by a responsive, identifying audience (see Chapter Three above). Emotion, like imagination, is a *visitation*, a manifestation of the performance matrix of body, text and voice, and the images composed through it. For this to happen, the voice, and the performer, must be dissociated from ready-made or received readings of the text that may be produced through its own syllabic rhythmic structures and composition, and, more importantly (and, for Pardo, obstructively), any cultural patina of expected meaning it may have acquired through authority, "... in literary theatre...". The performer's voice must therefore be:

"... [I]mmersed in complex images with multiple subjects, as in dreams when we start with *two* subjects: 'I dreamt that I ...'. The protagonist voice is here the person voicing the text, the voice-person through whom the text is brought into context..." (ibid., p.46)

This becomes work of close listening; in workshops Pardo often uses the image of herbivores drinking at a waterhole to indicate the quality of vulnerable sensitivity to



environment required. Although supporting performers provide the impetus for movement, positioning, pace and mood, usually through one or two leaders and groups of followers, who might vocalise from time to time, only the speaker, who is always among the followers, can actually speak (i.e. use language). This activity creates a landscape into which the language of the spoken text can fall, and its meaning coagulates within this. The idea of the speaker being unable to know in advance the effect of the text produces a sense of being inside an experience, a world where it is possible to be ambushed or exposed by language - "... rather than imposing its subject, the subject is sub-jected..." (ibid., p. 49). As a result of this, the voice is not prescribed by meaning; the speaker's voice emerges according to the dynamic of the landscape-drama being 'worked up' (or, as Pardo indicates, 'figured out') around them.

In an earlier article, entitled *The Angel's Hideout: between dance and theatre* (1998), Pardo proposes a re-definition of emotions as 'angels', admitting that this is "... an overtly militant, mytho-poetical move." (ibid., p.24). Angels being messengers:

"... [I]t removes emotion from personal, subjective ownership; rather than being 'ours' or 'in us', emotions possess us. Inspiring presences, visitations, personified powers, emotions move us, often influxes, messengers from the ruling or unruly gods. They come with divine intention, and power, and handle the synapses between message and biology, mind and adrenalin..." (ibid. 24)

However eccentric the 'mytho-poetical' move, and its expression, may be, the proposition resonates with certain aspects of new performance's aversion to the 'knowing' performer, who 'uses' language. It has affinity not only with the divinely- or demoniacally-possessed performative bodies of Medieval mysticism, the 'ridden' dancers of Haitian Vodun (Deren, 1975), but also with the postmodern voice that chases identities through a fragment-storm of borrowing, imitation, quotation and repetition, where nothing can be originated or owned.

#### **4.2.3 More from the outside: vocalic bodies**

In his exploration of the history of ventriloquism, Steven Connor presents the idea of the



'vocalic body' as a sort of composite-intermediary between sound, corporeality and idea/imagination . It is a body in proximity to the body of origin, produced by the voice itself:

"The vocalic body is the idea - which can take the form of dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine, or hallucination - of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice. ... Such bodies are not fixed and finite, nor are they summarizable in the form of a typology, precisely because we are always able to imagine and enact new forms of voice-body." (Connor, 2000,pp.35-36)

This vocalic body is created out of the voice's 'exceeding' of itself and its source (ibid. 36). This excess is readily produced by the sounds of the extended voice proposed by Wolfsohn and Hart, and, in conjunction with voiced text, can provide another position from which that text can be heard (or indeed spoken). A voice that seems non-human, or rather, extra- or para-human, but nevertheless in proximity to the human, can easily place itself outside a body of origin. In this way, a vocalic body can stand for the unconscious of a text-in-performance. This is emphatically not a relation of interpretation, but rather of environment or even visitation (see the discussion of Pardo above).

A body, a performer, vocalising in this way, with the voice precipitating the object that is the vocalic body, is in many ways antithetical to the banal presence of the performance practices discussed earlier. Sounding in this way carries the implication or imputation of dramatisation. Even if it lacks or deliberately eschews recognisable text or character, its removal from the everyday, from the appearance (or performance) of not-Acting, immediately theatricalises performance. The vocalic body, which is the presence of the elevated, distorted and extended voice can also therefore reflect the theatrical side of performance's prehistory, even as it is disengaged from narrative structure. The voice here, which is a voice-beyond/behind/before-language is bound up with an evidencing of affect, a *performance of emotion*, that is at odds with the detached, cool voice to which much contemporary performance is habituated:



*In a workshop recently, preparing a short performance with two much younger female co-participants, both formally trained in Performance (rather than Theatre, or Acting), and both practitioners, I suggested, by demonstration, how we (or I) might approach the performance of something we were thinking around - the loss of the world's languages, the disappearance of voices and thoughts. I opened my mouth into a sort of Butoh 'black hole' and produced a series of quiet catches, a sputtering sound made in the throat, not pleasant to watch or listen to (reminiscent of an animal coughing or retching). They were visibly horrified. I felt I had overstepped some mark, breached the decorum of the idiom in which we had hitherto been working.*

*Later, one of the workshop leaders spoke of 'the construction of emotion', whereby a set of physical gestures (a man standing on one leg pours water over his raised bare foot, after describing the death of a man who fell from a high bridge) stands in for the performance of emotion, but moves us nevertheless.*

I relate the above anecdote because the incident has made me think about whether what we have called Acting is necessarily also the performance of emotion, and *vice versa*. If the voice without language is always emotional, does this mean that, in employing it, we will somehow be breaching the decorum of non-theatrical performance practices?

Off-text, extended voice work, and the vocalic bodies it creates, places *in situ*:'s performance of *TMP* in a relationship with both the traditions of experimental theatre (through both the Roy Hart Theatre and its teachers, and *in situ*:'s own predecessor, Cambridge Experimental Theatre - see the Introduction to the thesis) and the concerns of more deconstructive practices, with a foregrounding of the struggle to represent. The locus of this relationship is the highly pluralised interface of texts, voices and bodies (vocalic and corporeal) that exists within *in situ*:'s work. In the following section, I will write through *TMP* with the aim of evoking comparison with, and divergence from, the material discussed in the sections above.



### 4.3 *The Macbeth Project*: the constituents of the performance

The description that follows is a necessarily brief outline of the elements of *TMP* as a performance. My own relationship to *TMP* is complicated by my occupying a dual position: for the first three months of the project I was co-director, watching performances as they were developed and moving 'freely' through the piece as it unfolded in rehearsal; after the work-in-progress performance in March 2001, I became a performer, replacing a cast member who dropped out. The descriptive material here and in the following section therefore refers to scenes both directly experienced by me, and performance events that I knew were taking place but could never witness. It is a split perspective characteristic of the fieldwork of human science disciplines – the double-bind of participant observation that requires one to be both inside and outside the experience simultaneously.

*TMP* produced (among other things) a playing of a cut-down version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *in the presence of the complete text*, and included spoken textual material from outside the play. The action took place in the house, and used the entire interior space. There were multiple foci at any given point, and sequences and events were enacted simultaneously in different parts of the house.

As with other house projects, the house interior itself is not significantly altered in order to perform the piece. This adds to the sense that the performance has not had a space cleared for it, but rather must take place in the interstices, in living space. A house performance is within and alongside its surroundings.

In *TMP*, the audience is denied access to only one room, the 'reading room', where the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is physically located, in the form of books to be read from, and pages stuck to the walls. Activity in this room is limited to the reading aloud of the text (including stage directions). This is undertaken by a cameraman, Pete Arnold, and up to three of any of the other performers. In practice, individual performers only read at times when they have no other tasks elsewhere. Such moments are specific to each performer and do not tend to vary from performance to performance.



The cameraman films the readers, including himself, and sometimes scans the text on the walls. All this is relayed to two televisions, one downstairs in the living room, the other upstairs, in a room that serves as a changing room and store for certain objects used in the performance. By turning up the volume, performers can check the progress of the reading, which provides the basal structure and duration of the piece, allowing us to situate ourselves within the performance, and to know if we are due to perform a specific task, make our way to a certain room etc. Live enactments are synchronised with the reading through this. The relative pace of the reading as against the time necessary to enact specific scenes means that the performed sequences frequently lag behind the reading. But, because by no means every scene is performed, and the facility for checking progress, the performance always catches up after a played-out sequence.

There are ten performers. Of these, two have roles that do not correspond to any indicated characters in the text of the Shakespeare play - the cameraman, and a sort of stage manager figure, taken by Rob Clother. The rest move between performance tasks that sometimes involve delivering lines designated to specific characters in the play.

Three performers - Iain Coleman, Tim Waterfield and Geoff Broad - take Macbeth, and another three, Lady Macbeth/Witches - Sakura Nishimura, Sue Kenwick and myself (for the 2001 performances, the first two were Jane Williams and Wiep Scheper); Banquo and King Duncan are also designated to specific performers (Steve Adams and Brandon High respectively).

This means that all scenes involving one or both of the Macbeth couple can be played simultaneously in up to three different places. It is also possible to begin a scene with one Macbeth or Lady Macbeth, move to another part of the house, and finish the same scene with another, different, pairing. Any variations are chosen by the performers, and therefore could be subject to accident, varying from performance to performance.

However, as only certain parts of the text are committed to memory by certain performers, this means that, unlike *Decameron*, an accident machine does not drive *TMP*. This function is fulfilled by the reading of the play-text of *Macbeth*.

In addition to the learnt text of the character parts, performers work with additional material, which is known broadly in advance, but essentially improvised in detail. As in



*Decameron*, this is referred to as ‘second string material’. Like the playing of scenes in character (albeit to a greater or lesser degree), this secondary material also constitutes a performance task, in that it is something to which they will return throughout the piece, often interrupting other performance tasks (such as scene-playing) to do so. The three female performers also conduct brief, informal interviews, either with one another, or with one of the Macbeth performers. These are entirely in everyday persona, and can take place at any time. Interviewers ask questions related to their own second string material: childbirth, babies and infants, ghost sightings, incidents of blood loss etc.

#### **4.4 *in situ*:’s *The Macbeth Project*: voice and text in a contemporary performance practice**

In this section I return to some of the ideas and practices discussed in the first two sections, setting them into the context of *in situ*:’s work, specifically *TMP*. My aim is to show that textual-vocal practice is an inter-practice that, while not a unitary phenomenon in itself, combines many strands of practice and dimensions of creative approach. Specific attention was paid to what we came to view as formulations of violence, in the form of vocal and performative responses to both conscious and unconscious textual material. The piece became the site for an exploration of the specific ways in which voice can realise the violence inherent in textual content. This is frequently afforded by a separation of such vocalisation from the words of the text, i.e. they are not voiced by the same person. This is a form of the dissociative practice described by Enrique Pardo (see Section 4.2.2 above); it falls to the text-speaker to take on this other sound, without imitation or assimilation into their own performance. They must stand with(in) it (or *with-stand* it). Because sound is pervasive, rather than directional, a point noted in some detail by Connor (2000: 5), the two voices need not be in visible proximity; there is an element of chance, coincidence, visitation and disruption in their relationship.

*Rob, wearing a plain, but very strongly-coloured scarlet dress, is in the sitting area. He has a bin-liner full of mutilated dolls and doll body-parts, which he carefully places around the room. As*



*he does so, he reads out the scene where Lady MacDuff and her children are murdered. He intersperses his reading with a commentary, saying things like, "The children's toys would be broken up and scattered around in the raid, by the murderers. Or you could imagine these as the children themselves..." He has to keep stopping, sometimes raising his voice, because there are loud excited bird-like or animal sounds coming from upstairs, it is like a zoo at feeding time. Also it sounds as if someone is walking on the bed, there are creaking and scraping noises. It seems to annoy him. He carries on, eventually sprawling on the sofa himself, as the murdered Lady MacDuff. He first places a dainty pair of black knickers around one of his ankles, saying, "Probably they would have raped her first..."*

Such strategies return us once more to the difference between 'construction' and 'performance' of emotion discussed at the end of the preceding section. What can only be constructed through and by the sensorium of the piece is the unrepresentable nature of the extreme physical violence that constitutes the text-world's *milieu*. This cannot be performed, in the sense of represented, although there are other means of performance that can indicate or express it, wherein lies the tension between these forms that underlies *TMP*, and indeed all of *in situ*:'s work.

*TMP* is constituted as a play of encounters between a number of text-forms and the actions done on them. These include readings and vocal practices which perform not only the propositional content of the text, but also seek to diverge into other material, derived through idiomatic association by the performers themselves from within their experience of the performance.

The play itself (Shakespeare's *Macbeth*) is most obviously present in two forms within the performance – as an artefact, the book, the text that is read out, word for word, and as its more conventional manifestation, a script, being what the actors say. This latter is only ever part of the story; it makes what happens, in the sense that a play script can be seen as a series of 'speech acts' (Austin, 1975; Parker and Sedgwick, 1995) – words that



have the status of actions, but here only by virtue of their belonging in a fictive universe. This is what allows us to understand that the Thane of Cawdor has been executed – I have said so, in the play world, and this makes it so, in the play world. The same is true if I say I have drugged someone's posset, or that I am Thane of Glamis, and so on.

These quasi-speech acts in *TMP* are subjected to treatment that serves not so much to build up or thicken the narrative-propositional mix, but to allow the formation of an accumulation of potential images and ideas - associative accretions around the text - through which performers and audience move around inside the narrative. This, together with the performers' insinuation of their own material into the already-friable play-world, renders down the text into a series of points or places which are more or less vulnerable to further rupture and intervention.

The reading of the play in (and the siting of this reading within) the performance destabilises this notion of the script as the Atlas that must bear the world of the play. By pointing out that the play, and therefore the script derived from it, is an artefact, it is separated from its own fiction. From now on, the fictional world of the play, as evinced through 'script', is engaged in a struggle to assert itself. Quite literally, it can no longer be taken as read.

*He puts on rubber gloves, emphasising the necessity of using bleach to sterilize the area, as well as cleaning products and 'elbow grease' to remove all visual traces of blood and human tissue. He begins to swill down the tiled walls surrounding the bath; the water runs in streaks of pink. Then he scrubs the grouting thoroughly. As he works he describes what he is doing, taking a pride in his attention to detail. The (predominantly instant coffee) smell of the homemade fake blood is gradually replaced by the smell of cleaning products. He notes that this is the most important part of the job - 'covering your tracks'.*

The very title of the piece conveys that everything about the play - its language, narrative structure, content, history and cultural patina - is the subject of the performance, thus doubling, or reiterating the sense of performance as something which



is *done on* a text, and that, therefore, there is no such thing as a 'performance text' (see above).

The performers' own words constitute another major strand of the performance.

Whether they are built around training and expertise, as in Sue Kenwick's use of scientific discourse around identity/identification/bodily fluids, personal experience, like Iain Coleman's stories of Glaswegian hard men he had known, or the associative fantasy of Geoff Broad's self-reimagining as a serial killer, all are specifically individualised encounters with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

In *in situ*.'s work, these spoken texts are responses to something else (which can itself take the form of another text). In *Decameron*, this was the collection of tales itself, and the so-called frame-story, of sitting out the Black Death in a country villa, in *Without History* (2002), the performance space of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, its contents and the making of their meanings across time and space (see Chapter Five below for a full discussion of this piece). The performers make text about their own way in to the work. It is this, second string material, which provides a *con-text* for everything else. Often, it is the underlying fear, obsession, desire, the thing to which they must keep returning – something utterly 'outside of the text' (i.e. the task-text, the first string – Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the Museum) and yet completely of it, the mark where it entered the performer. It reflects performers' use of it as a device to highlight both the performative nature of their presence in this non-theatre environment, and their status as destabilised characters. Second string material is usually allied to a performance persona that is least fictionalised and closest to a credible reading of a performer's non-performing, i.e. everyday persona. It must be added that this is not always the case, and second string may also represent yet another dimension of characterisation. This characterisation emerges from a self-state sponsored by the performer's own response to the text, the play, the words and images. It is the imprint of the *disposition* experienced in reading or hearing it. The play and its matrix act upon the performers, causing shifts of perception, imaginative flights, sensory experiences; these are shifts of position vis-a-vis the world, and the second string material is the result of the performers' observations



of this. An intertextual dynamic is set up, whereby texts are constructed and re-constructed as portals for specific individual performances-within-the-performance. Within the *fragmentarium* thus created, texts are brought into relationship alongside the narrative structure.

*Iain, Steve and Brandon are sitting on the sofa, waiting for the performance to start. Brandon is wearing a heavy crown and an ermine-trimmed red cloak. He is watching the TV screen intently. Tim is standing by the dining table, he can't keep still, keeps coming round to look at the TV. He says things to the audience, like, "It'll be starting in a minute", and, "Not long now".*

*On the table, Geoff is kneeling, blindfolded, his hands tied behind his back. There is an unlit cigarette in his mouth.*

*A picture appears on the TV; the camera is moving slowly over the faces of three women who are sitting at a table. They seem to be looking back at the men on the sofa. They start to read, "Macbeth, by William Shakespeare. Act One, Scene One. An open place. Thunder and lightning. Enter three witches." Rob, who has been hovering around with his script folder, sends Tim and Steve upstairs, telling them to, "Get ready for the first Witches' scene". Several audience members follow them.*

Goat Island's use of fragmented associative material is here strongly paralleled in *in situ*.'s practice. While self-generated, or found, text in the former's work is written down and learnt by a performer, in *in situ*.'s work this is rarely the case. Goat Island's work in studio and theatrical spaces uses a carefully-placed audience who are seated and stationary but nevertheless positioned in more intimate proximity (with performers and each other - their audiences are usually arranged in sections that somehow face, or are frontally visible to, each other) than such spaces usually allow. This active concern with *placing* is consistent with Goat Island's engagement with formal structures. *in situ*.'s performers rarely write and learn text, but allow forms of words to settle over the



rehearsal and performance period, with the knowledge that this is subject to disruption from the 'accident machine' of the performance itself, and an ongoing associative process that adds and changes material as it is used. I suggest that this difference is as much a product of the scale and nature of the performance environment as the specific artistic interests of the company. In the house, audience and performers share space, but it is a space that is divided into discrete sub-spaces. Through this, experience itself becomes discrete, divided up, and not apparently subject to an always-evident organising principle. A performance event always gives the sense that it may not have happened, and is the result of a number of generative events, accidents and decisions. To withstand this, text must retain not only its ambiguity and mutative properties - its parapractic tendencies (following Freud's term for slips of the tongue), but its right to remain silent, replace itself, be indisposed.

Within *in situ*:*'s fragmentarium*, space itself cannot own text, and performers can be unreliable or reluctant custodians of it.

The presence of second string material allows performers to change scene simply by adopting another performance register, and quite literally just talking about something else. Thus, the hold of the play's text world on these reluctant performers is always incomplete, their characterisations have a tendency to leak into one another, and even prolonged periods of inhabiting roles are rendered insecure.

*Iain is standing in the kitchen, talking about a man called Raymond, someone he used to know in his hometown of Glasgow. Raymond had been in the army and was a bit of a loose cannon.*

*One evening, they'd all been out drinking and were in a chip shop. Raymond was very drunk and agitated; he announced that he wanted to 'kill a student'. Iain says that there was something in the way he said it that made him very frightened, it convinced him he would do it if he could. Iain describes how he and the others tried to talk sense to Raymond, but he began to shout abuse at a young man on the other side of the road. Iain was*



*scared and got a rush of adrenalin, it was as if a fight had already started, although it was 'just' Raymond shouting. Then, he made a sort of rush, like an animal, and they had to hold him back, all the time he was shouting terrifying things at his victim, about kicking him to death and cutting his throat. The young man ran away, and they had to hold Raymond down for several minutes until he calmed down a bit. Iain says he felt sick afterwards. He pours himself a glass of water and drinks it.*

In *TMP*, the space of performance is an ordinary, furnished, occupied house. It is this that the performers inhabit, where everything they do takes place. This inhabiting becomes a textual position, in that the materiality of this environment is outside the world of Shakespeare's play, and makes no concessions to it. There is no specially-constructed 'set', representing a blasted heath, a castle, a house in Forres, somewhere in Scotland etc. The textual world of the play, as it appears through the enacted scenes, is played across the real world, the world inhabited by the audience.

Enrique Pardo's formulation of the imagination/emotion as exterior to the performers, and indeed the performance as a conscious construction (Pardo, 1998 and 2003), is once again relevant here. The fragile fiction of the play, exposed and weakened by the pervasive presence of its own reading-out, cannot take place everywhere for the entire duration of the performance. It has no singular environment that belongs to it alone; like performers and audience, it must share the space, rub along with other worlds. But, in the selective enactment of specific scenes, *in response to the reading itself*, it is the very text of the play that takes on the status of the visitation Pardo describes. It descends on the performers, invoked by the reading (just as the performance itself is induced by the 'witches' reading of the first scene). It is at these points, the enactments of scenes, the places where performers play the characters, where the text descends. The textworld momentarily supersedes the real world of the house context, and the performers themselves are occupied, inhabited, even possessed by the text they speak. Even though the fit is momentary, the effect is intensified: the text of *Macbeth* inhabits the space of the house, adhering to, and detaching from, performers, by turns. In this



way, the text is not ruptured and sabotaged by its context; the dynamic is, if anything, reversed.

It is to this that the formulation of violence mentioned in the introductory remarks above refers. At one level at least, that of its narrative content, the play is about violence. Its stylised poetic language and form do not reflect this, and performances of the play even within the experimental tradition (for example, Cambridge Experimental Theatre's versions of *Macbeth* during the 1980s, one of them a two-hander played out of and around a wardrobe) are ordered, linear things, where the world of the play is formed under some unitary aesthetic, and subsequently adhered to, whatever else emerges from the particular reading. It is undeniable that this tension between form and content is in part what makes the work so openable; every place where the poetry speaks of indescribable things is a potential place of rupture, of the body's uncomfortable encounter with language (see the discussion on Forced Entertainment in Section 4.1.1 above). The formulation of this violence is, in *in situ*.'s work, staged as the effect of its dispositionings upon the performers, and as displacements and dissociations within the space. These latter are the voices of the text and its effects - the obliterating banshee howls and twitters of the Witches, the mewling of the doomed King. *TMP* does not constitute an attack on the text itself, a revisioning or reconstitution or even a dismantling of it, but formulates its violence through the encounter with the individual and specific psychic worlds of its performers, its interlocutors. All texts are as flesh: performers embody texts, not by acting them out, but through converting them into inhabited bodies by allowing them to descend into them, and into vocalic bodies. This latter is another action of externalisation, making a body for/of the text through the voice that takes its place 'outside' and 'elsewhere' (Connor, 2000: 5).

*The Witches assemble in the bedroom; they have pencils in their hands. They are hooting and twittering and screeching excitedly. They sound like birds or animals, very excited and agitated. Sometimes it seems they are trying to make words, but the speech turns into gurgles and choking sounds. They write on the walls, they stand on the bed where King Duncan is laid out, so that they*



*can scrawl on the ceiling. The pencils skate and jump around on the Artex and woodchip; it looks like writing but isn't. They seem to enjoy the scratching noise it makes.*

The *Macbeth* text, on leaving a performer, leaves behind a residue, born of their encounter with it, and this can engender that textual world – the con-text, or second string described above. This is at once the performer's own way in to the text, and their exit from it, albeit an exit into an unsettling world of memories, speculations and obsessions that exert their own hold. In this way, the play text is made present even when it is not in the performer's mouth. It seems that whatever he or she says will form its own tangential and allusive relationship to the play world and/or the imagery of the text. Consider, for example, the relationship between Macbeth's reported 'unseaming' of a traitorous enemy on the battlefield (Act 1, sc.2) and an account given later by Iain of the psychotic ex-soldier Raymond's attempt to attack a student on a Glasgow street. The performers become part of the means by which the text haunts the space.

A visitation by the text of the play is not necessarily desired by the performers; it is something to which they are subject (this applies specifically to the three Macbeths, Banquo and, to a lesser extent, King Duncan). In so far as it is a source of abjection for them, the text is resisted. Playings of scenes and obeying the stage manager are undertaken with reluctance: there is always a struggle to remain outside, to not be inhabited. Both the performer and text are fragile at these moments, on the edge of absenting themselves. Sometimes the text does not win, the performer falls silent mid-scene, his interlocutor leaves, the Witches cause a disturbance. The very pervasiveness of the play text testifies to its fragility. Only the 'unmarked' (Phelan, 1993) can take itself as read. In the second string material, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is talked around, held at bay. Even as its scenes are enacted, it is being performed, performers keep up a struggle against it.

The play text is never literally absent, but as a play world it is often so. The presence of the latter is always compromised by the mechanics of the performance itself, whose setting resists make-believe, whose performers, like those of the Wooster Group, in using similar strategies, resist characterisation. When a performer drops character, or



uses second-string material, they are making the absence of the play world's text felt; they cannot erase it once the performance has begun. Instead, they are caught in a dynamic of absence and presence between playings of themselves and playings of the play world's characters.

*Brandon, lying still on the bed with a cloth over his eyes, and a heavy sword resting on his body, is talking about Lao Tzu's 'Art of War'. Sakura comes in and tells him to "Stop". She begins to recount a ghost sighting experienced by her sister, but loses interest, she tells him to "Start" again, and leaves the room.*

Performers moving through a performance of strategies, tasks and encounters create texts between themselves, in that they become readable to one another. This is often entirely contextual – a performer may only read another if they appear in a certain way at a specific point. For example, Lady Macbeth, leading the mewling and whimpering King Duncan upstairs to his death, enacts the role of the Bad Mother of infant phantasy (this spelling denotes the specific Kleinian use and refers to a pre-verbal imagining of the split nourishing/tormenting presence of the primary carer). This can be read and responded to differently by the stage manager, the three Macbeths and Banquo, should any of them encounter her. This may allow one of the Macbeths to identify with her, or with the persecuted 'infant', and seek her out to play the next scene accordingly. In this way, an earlier embodiment, or reading, is carried into a later part of the performance. Individuals modified readings and responses from performance to performance, and sometimes within performances. In relation to this, the entire performance of *TMP* can be seen as a series of variously embodied texts, created by juxtapositions and combinations of private texts, overlaid and/or underpinned by the central text (Shakespeare's *Macbeth*) in all the forms in which it appears within the piece.

The body of the text is itself concretised in the reading room. The read text brings into being a vocalic body of the text that is outside the enactment of it, yet releases it into performance and the embodied, sensory world – much as the reading explicitly engenders the performance at the beginning of the piece.



## Concluding remarks: text and voice as the 'other bodies' of performance

*Steve, wrapped up in a bathrobe, comes downstairs and sits on the sofa. He is 'himself', not doing anything. He is joined by the Witches, their faces daubed with camouflage paint. They sit on the sofa too. They have stopped twittering and hissing and screeching; they're just watching the TV. The screen goes dark for a minute or so and there is the sound of movement from upstairs. Then Brandon appears on the screen, filmed by Pete as he goes to sit down in the reading room. Pete tells him to read Malcolm's final speech, which ends the play, filming him as he does so. Then the screen goes dark again. Brandon's voice is heard, this time describing a doll he was given as a toddler, "at my insistence", its hand-knitted clothes, and its final, abject, state, naked and dismembered.*

Within this chapter I have sought to place *in situ*:'s vocal and textual practice into a context of contemporary approaches that either parallel it, or have provided direct influence. The company's work has produced an apparently diverse and contradictory field of practice that holds in tension many elements associated with the theatrical (as defined in the introduction to Chapter Three above) with those that are usually associated with more postmodern performance, and nowhere is this more evident than in the use of text and voice.

The concerns of space and its employment have emphasised the corporeal/phenomenological aspects of the company's practice, and the use of the voice is bound up with this, not as a vehicle for words and texts, but as a potential landscape or environment itself - a vehicle for imagination, for what is physically absent.

Texts can be part of the array of material of performance, or they can be allusive, fugitive, half-present. They can never stand as the sole subject of a performance practice that relies so heavily upon dispersal, uncertainty, chance and the potential for failure.



Within *in situ*.'s work, there are always other bodies, outside of the performers and audience, and it is the work of performance to indicate and evoke them. In refusing to allow a treatment of text and voice that situates them as belonging to, or originating with, performers, an *in situ*: performance creates a series of openings, both inward and outward, between the material world of space and objects, words and bodies.

Texts and voices also arise outside verbal language, they have a material life, and have material form through objects, *things* in the world that resound as kinds of textual phenomena. They do this partly because of their ability to cathect memory, to memorialise, to 'stand in' for the immaterial. In this respect they are like performers, at once bodies and texts, presences and absences.

In the next chapter, I will investigate *in situ*.'s practice through this specific aspect of its work in the nexus of material, memory and embodied experience.



## Chapter Five

### ***Without History: material bodies and the siting of memory***

*For me, Without History had a long incubation. From 1991 to 1995, I worked in the Haddon Library of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University. The Museum was in the same building, just down the corridor. While it was through this connection that in situ: came to be invited to make a performance in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, my time in the Library had allowed me to immerse myself in its disciplines both intellectually, through reading, and socially, through the friendships I made with archaeologists (mostly research students of my own age) while I was there. The books I read, discussions I had and ideas I absorbed underwent a long filtration process through my own developing performance practice in the years after I had moved on.*

*The relationship between the making and performing of Without History and my recalling, analysing and writing about it here is therefore bound up with my own established interest in the Museum's subjects. The connection however, remained in a sort of latency throughout the making of the piece in the sense that, although I was aware of certain discourses, certain facts, certain themes and issues, the process of making the performance centred around our more immediate responses to being in the Museum and among its artefacts. It is not a case of not allowing my background knowledge to infiltrate the work, to deny or to suppress it in the name of some immediacy or spontaneity, but rather that we began with the place itself and the performers' response to it. As directors, Richard and I began by asking them to work from and with what struck them, what they were drawn to, what bored or repelled or mystified them. It is hard therefore, for me to distinguish how I might have influenced the process through my own interests. Ideas of absence and silence, the potential otherness of ourselves, the positioning and questioning of the authoritative descriptive voice undoubtedly emerged from and through our (the directors') own responses, and these, like the responses of the performers, are formed out of a variety of influences and associations.*



*When I came to recall and write about Without History, my articulation of its themes emerged through my use of the ideas from archaeological theory I had absorbed years before. I had incorporated this thinking invisibly into my approach to performance and, when I came to write about it, it was reformulated through my reflection upon a specific performance-making process. It is truer for me to say that I became conscious of working with this material only through writing about in situ:'s practice, and subsequently was able to use it to think with, to unravel my own thinking. In this respect, this chapter constitutes a remembering of Without History both as an experience and a way of re-incorporating some of its raw material.*

## **Introduction**

Within any artistic practice that produces a body of work over time, certain interests, concerns and preoccupations are revisited, re-envisioned and reflected upon again and again. Such phenomena may form the consciously-recognised inspirational bedrock of the work, the impetus for it and the ground to which it always returns. There are also the unconscious tracings, ideas and images that arrive in the work and are never wholly absent; perhaps derived from the presence of specific individuals or combinations of individuals. These are by definition difficult to see from the inside, still harder to describe and comment upon. Often their presence defines the 'atmosphere' of a particular practice; not unintentionally, but somehow 'unworked', carrying and carried by the known and the presented.

Applying this to *in situ:*'s work, I see it as centred around memory, death and absence, acts of retrieval or re-enactment, a struggle with the unfamiliar, inadequacy and failure. The company often works where there is a lack, not enough to go on, fragments, remnants, traces. From this perspective, the task of performance could be seen as one of filling in the gaps, reconstructing, offering solutions and scenarios that somehow complete the picture, 'tell the whole story'. But performance can also seek to enter this predicament, and partake of it. In a sense, *in situ:*'s practice is intended to *make things*



worse, appearing to redouble uncertainty, revel in, or even to create, instabilities. In doing so, we seek to do justice to the complexity of things, to proliferation, our practice emphasises that part of the 'lostness' of the cause of representation lies in the fact that there is simply *too much there* to show.

In this chapter I will focus upon what seems to me to have emerged as some specific thematic preoccupations in *in situ*:'s work as a whole, and which converge in the company's 2002 piece, *Without History*, devised and performed in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (CUMAA). These themes are bound up with those of space, intimacy and proximity, and concern the ways in which the materiality of bodily presence is constitutive of relationships with absent others. This is particularly instrumental in *in situ*:'s explorations of memory, the past and the complex presence of the dead (see in particular the discussions of the company's performances of *Transmissions* in Chapter One, and *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* in Chapter Two).

The imaginative tropes of psychoanalysis and archaeology have, one way or another, formed the matrix for almost every piece described in this thesis, some more overtly than others, as in the psychoanalytic turn of *Father...* (Chapter Two). Outside *in situ*:'s work, outside performance, the metaphorical interconnection has been well-documented, not least by Freud himself, most famously in his essay, *Constructions in Analysis* (1964), where he writes that:

"[T]he two processes [of psychoanalysis and archaeology] are in fact identical, except that the analyst works under better conditions and has more material at his command to assist him, since what he is dealing with is not something destroyed but something that is still alive ..." (ibid., p.259)

*Without History*, in a museum of the dead and distant, partakes of the archaeological imagination, the *space* of archaeology, but its work emerges as an attempt, or a series of attempts to discover how this space is constituted. This is itself a fundamental theme in *in situ*:'s work, explored through different aspects of the company's practice in preceding chapters.



In common with previous chapters, the current chapter is in three sections. The first section is a discussion of the selection of archaeological and other writings upon which I have drawn in thinking about *Without History* and its place in the company's work as a whole. The second is a description of the piece, and how the various tasks of individual performers allow the performance to unfold into the space. The work of some of these archaeologists, artists and theorists has been a part of my own thought-environment for many years, and bringing it into a relationship with performance practice has been part of the impetus for undertaking this thesis. In the third section, I examine *Without History* in the light of these broadly 'archaeological' approaches. I have always found archaeology 'good to think with' (as I have the idea of 'the audience' - see the introduction to Chapter One), but its use for me is not primarily as a metaphor. I see it as a bodily *practice* that engages directly with the interaction of humans and the world, but through fragments and traces. My encounter with, and use of, archaeological ideas is, however, specific. Archaeology is not one approach, one way of working with the past and its remains; from within at least, it can be as contested a field as any other discipline within the human sciences. More recent archaeological thinking, at least since the 1980s, heavily influenced by post-structuralism and hermeneutics, as well as social theory and psychoanalysis, has emphasised the contextual nature of practice and the position of the archaeologist within contemporary structures and discourses of power and knowledge (Hodder, 1987, 1991; Shanks and Tilley, 1987 and 1992; Bapty and Yates, 1990; Shanks, 1992). Archaeology is re-formulated as the production of knowledge about the past in the present. An enquiry into memory, identity and representation, it holds in tension the ephemeral and the concretely material. In this I see a strong affinity with performance that is analogous and not metaphorical.

I do not aim to sideline anthropology. From its Euro-American inception as 'the study of mankind', it has become a study of humans-as-others, even if this includes ourselves. Marc Augé (1995, p.18) characterises it as dealing with 'the other in the present'. The 'making an other of oneself' that I identify as essential to performance practice is also the condition that makes it possible to do anthropology. *in situ*'s practice is bound up with explorations of the otherness situated with and in the past, and it is from this perspective that alterities are approached. Johannes Fabian, in his influential work, *Time and the*



*Other: how anthropology makes its object*, identifies the specific use of concepts of time as germane to the separation of the western anthropologist (the researcher) from his or her subject (the studied). This separation was often specifically formulated through a historicization of peoples, placing them in a sort of eternalised 'past', with the anthropologist experiencing them in his or her 'present'. This 'diachronism' renders any sort of exploratory partnership between the researcher and the object of study impossible (2002: x-xi).

In CUMAA, the collections range over archaeological-historical time and geographical space, almost to the point of the two fields being interchangeable, at least in the forms of their approach. The collection has its origins in Cook's first voyage to the South Pacific, observing the transit of Venus in 1769, and was further augmented by Baron Von Hügel's visits to Fiji and the Pacific in the nineteenth century. The famous Torres Strait expeditions of Alfred Cort Haddon and W.H. Rivers in the first decade of the twentieth century added a considerable body of material. These events constitute part of the attested origins of Anthropology as a field of study in Britain, and the objects and artefacts in the collections also stand as witness to them. CUMAA is therefore a museum of its own area of study, in part constitutive of it.

As with previous chapters where I have drawn from approaches from outside performance studies itself, I do not seek to provide an overview of all archaeological thinking that may have some bearing on *in situ*.'s work. I have responded to particular works by particular individuals, and have sought to bring these specific archaeological approaches to bear in writing about *Without History*; they specifically emphasise the body, the object and materiality. It is also my aim to examine where *in situ*.'s practice is itself drawing upon the archaeological, or where it seems to partake in a specifically archaeological imagination of its material. Later in the section, I discuss the company's referencing of the post-war Japanese movement form of Butoh within this context. The dancing body of Butoh is imagined as being closely connected to the ground and the world of the dead - it is a form in many ways predicated upon absence and loss, as the name *Ankoku Butoh*, the 'dance of utter darkness', intimates.



## **5.1 Material bodies and the object of archaeology**

Archaeology is a dual practice, in the sense that it is made up of two discrete activities, digging and interpretation. Under the former is subsumed a great number of processes, including especially those of recording (not all archaeological 'sites' are under the earth and require physical excavation. There are, for example, innumerable rock carvings in Scandinavia, remote and barely accessible, where the equivalent of 'excavation' is notation, mapping and description. See Tilley, 1990, for a theoretical exposition of such a site, based on detailed records made in the early part of the twentieth century).

Interpretation is the work of extracting meaning from the remains of the past.

'Archaeology' itself then has multiple meanings: the material in and on the ground (as in "The archaeology around here is fantastic"), the work of uncovering and recording it, and the activity of thinking about it.

Michael Shanks, in his collaborative work with Mike Pearson, *Theatre/Archaeology* (Pearson and Shanks, 2001) summarises a personal understanding of the work and nature of archaeology:

"For me, archaeology is not a discipline but a cultural field. It means to work upon understanding archaeological things - material traces and material cultures, understanding the creative event that is the construction of archaeological knowledge, and the historical context of such an archaeological project." (ibid., xiv)

While I do not intend to take this as some sort of final definition to which any and every archaeologist would subscribe, its focus on 'understanding archaeological things' affords a place from which to begin thinking 'archaeologically' about *in situ*'s performance practice, perhaps even approaching it as an 'archaeological thing'. By this I do not mean to engage in a work of comparison, combination or interpenetration that would reiterate Pearson and Shanks' 'blurred genre', but rather to write through an encounter with the



specific materiality of performance as a bodily practice in a world of things and places.

The 'creative event' is produced by what the archaeologist Julian Thomas terms the 'archaeological imagination', which he characterises as a way of dealing with materiality that is specific to archaeology: "... [W]e use material traces as evidence for past human activities." (Thomas, 1996: 55). Jennifer Wallace, in *Digging the dirt: the archaeological imagination* (2004) emphasises the negative ontology of excavation:

"[T]he archaeological imagination responds to what is missing rather than to what is there. It snatches objects from the ground only to try to restore some sense of their original context in the earth so as to understand them properly. It substitutes a story or an interpretation in place of what actually lies before it or in compensation for what has been lost or still lies buried. It attempts to transfigure the bleakness of the material with which it has to deal and to find something of significance in what can only be imagined, in the fancied depths, in what has disappeared." (ibid., p.24)

Wallace's description imputes to archaeology an impetus towards the construction of something that will fill in the gaps, tie up the loose ends, join the dots, that will retrieve and rebuild. The desire to piece or string something together to make a whole, single, unitary narrative, with (almost) everything accounted for, is rather more appropriate to the *literary* imagination, the transfer of thoughts into language so that the reader can in turn imagine things only written about as being in the world. The idea of the singular 'story or interpretation' that can be derived from material remains of the past, providing some sort of 'proper' understanding, has been the subject of extensive critical examination in archaeological theory since the 1980s (Hodder et al., 1995; Shanks, 1992; Tilley, 1993; Edmonds, 1999, among others). For these theorists, the irretrievable complexity of the past is reflected in the proliferation of meanings and stories that each material fragment has the potential to generate. Like the chain of signifiers, the remains of the past defy completion, always leading to another thing, another world, another fragment. Michael Shanks again, recalling giving a seminar on a Greek perfume jar:

"... I wanted to communicate the utter indeterminacy of this tiny but exquisite artefact. ... How it exploded in a cacophony of meanings and significances surrounding its design, manufacture and use.



It was about how the pot connects people and things together in its *life-cycle* (raw material-design-production-distribution-consumption-discard-discovery). ... And I extended this life-cycle to include myself and those listening to me in a seminar room..." (Pearson and Shanks, 2001, p.4-5)

This archaeological imagination is proliferative and associative because of the 'uncompleteable' nature of the remains of the past. Their 'indeterminacy' displaces us. Fragmentation, ruin, decay and erosion heighten the presence of archaeological remains because these phenomena attest to the passage of time, and with it transformation, and death.

It is the very *materiality* of remains that affords archaeology its strange dual ontology, which is one of both presence *and* absence. Archaeological remains are materially present, but the human agents and circumstances that caused them to be there and understood them in specific ways are absent.

*Discoid object, perhaps a weight for a fishing net or loom*

But archaeology also produces human agents in the present; to 'do archaeology' is to engage in a bodily practice. To take part in an excavation, or an archaeological survey (without getting hands dirty), is to be present in a place in a specific way. The sensory and physical work of archaeological excavation places archaeologists into relationships with past people that are imagined primarily through the body. Digging down into a midden to the smell of Roman London; carefully removing layers of earth in a burial, in close proximity with other engaged bodies, mixing speculation about the incumbent with gossip about friends and colleagues; shovelling earth out of a pit, effectively 're-digging' it. Stench, gossip, the repetitive movement of back and shoulders - these bodily experiences in the present connect material remains to the absent bodies of the past.



### 5.1.1 Of the absence of the body<sup>35</sup>: producing archaeological presence

Some recent archaeological thinking has engaged with phenomenological approaches, in particular to landscape and materiality (Tilley, 1994 and 2004), but also to archaeological theory in general (Thomas, 1996). These projects have sought to foreground the body as the locus and medium of human experience, and to subvert Cartesian notions of its separation from mental life (Thomas, 1996: 11).

Through this, understandings of the past can be produced by the placing and movement of engaged bodies in the present. While bodies and their self-understanding are products of historical and social circumstances and forces, this process is nevertheless continuous: although past bodies are constituted differently, the *way in which* they are constituted is the same - through being in the world. Christopher Tilley, in *The materiality of stone: explorations in landscape phenomenology* (2004), puts forward an idea of 'knowing' landscape that is based upon bodily experience, informed by memory in the form of already-held archaeological knowledge/experience:

"The material experience of stones *in place* is fundamental. The stones exert their muted agency in relation to us. They make an impact. We cannot describe them in any way we like.

Experiencing stones in place links an understanding of them to memory. It is memory that serves to connect knowledges of one place to another ... After a while, through revisiting these places, through a process of 'dwelling' in them, one hopefully achieves a feeling and sensibility for place, of repetitive elements and individual and unique features, which permits one to compare and contrast and deepen an interpretative understanding of the significance of these places for prehistoric populations. This understanding derives from an attempt to provide a thick description of place: how one encounters, feels, sees and senses that place, informed by an understanding of places that have previously been encountered." (ibid., pp.219-220)

---

<sup>35</sup> Often the remains of bodies are found, bones usually, but sometimes even hair and skin, depending upon the preservative qualities of the ground and the environment. These can tell us about the health, mobility, physical appearance, nutritional status and so on of people in the past, but they still constitute a form of absence, in their muteness, their remoteness from the living bodies of those who uncover and investigate them.



This practice formulates archaeology as a 'formation of attention' (a definition of culture given by the philosopher Simone Weil, and quoted by Goat Island in their 2004 piece, *When will the September roses bloom?/Last night was only a comedy*) in which an embodied subject produces understandings of phenomena by putting themselves into a relationship with their environment that is predicated upon an awareness of how that relationship is operating. The archaeologist is not pretending to be a prehistoric person, but *stands in* for one, in the present. The absent body that itself produces archaeology ('remains' being what remains of embodied human agents - see above) is thus in some way reconstituted when someone in the present produces themselves as an archaeologist. This reconstitution cannot of course be seen as restoration, a re-making of the past. Bodies are differently imagined, lived and conceived over time. The archaeologist working in the present enters a network of relations between bodies, space and time that is itself constituted by the tension of difference (the otherness of the past) and identity (embodiment itself). I will return to this idea later in the section.

This presencing can only be achieved through the *embodied* imagination, that seeks to question, unsettle or otherwise disturb the perceiving of the physical environment as a set of 'givens', resulting in something that can be described as a 'multiplying of space'. This can be thought of as analogous to the psychically active encounter between people and things discussed in Chapter Two. Humans and objects (including structures and therefore 'sites') are always already enmeshed, bound up with each other. In a phenomenologically-conceived archaeological practice, like the one described above, the presence of the body is partially constituted by the absence of other bodies for whom it stands in. Through this, it also partakes of a process of *becoming* (see Goulish, 2000a, quoted in Chapter 3 above) both object and site.

### *Urn containing cremation*



### 5.1.2 Sharing materiality: bodies and objects

Objects and artefacts belie the presence and action of bodies (embodied subjects) in the past, being the products of human activity, of more or less complex events. In archaeological terms, they are the remains of a continuing engagement with the world of things, itself produced by, and productive of, human identities:

"The fundamentally relational character of material things is manifested in their involvement in a network of multifaceted connections which spreads out from them limitlessly. At one level, things form parts of symbolic systems, interrelated by metaphorical association and metonymical connotation ... But a thing also manifests a raw material, bears traces of its transformation (by human or other means) and its ageing, and has a history which may include a series of past involvements with persons." (Thomas, 1996: 71)

Even if the nature of its 'involvements with persons' is no longer accessible to us, our experience of our relations with and through objects in the present allows us to bestow upon an artefact a complexity of presence that is not contingent upon specific kinds of knowledge. Part of this complexity is the absent body/ies of its past associates and associations. Like human presences, objects/artefacts carry the ability to diverge into other worlds of experience, narrative and memory. When we engage with them at this imaginative, associative, level, they can 'displace' us (c.f. Bollas, 1992: 17). This is another 'standing in', which foregrounds the materiality of human presence through something close to metonymic conversion: body-to-object, object-to-body.

The nature of this is doubly articulated<sup>36</sup> : the object becomes an *event-body*, an event that is extended over time, through its material nature. The artist Susan Hiller, who trained as an anthropologist and whose work engages in particular with the relationship of material to indefinable and ephemeral human phenomena - dreams, visions and possession, has articulated it thus:

"In 'reality' ... no dichotomy exists between objects and events. Objects are simply shapes resulting from actions and events that hold together long enough in one general condition to be considered units." (Einzig, 1996, p.170)

---

<sup>36</sup> This echoes the notion of the Sign itself, as formulated by the Prague Structuralists - see Matejka and Titunik, 1976, and Quinn, 1995, for discussions of this work.



An early (1980) work of Hiller's, *Work in progress*, consisted of the artist altering a series of paintings she had made and exhibited in 1974. In a London gallery, over the first week in which the work was shown, Hiller unravelled the weave of one canvas entirely, and re-worked the threads into plaited, knotted and tied 'sculptures'. The other canvases were cut up into small rectangles, arranged into bales and date-stamped. The sculptures and bales were subsequently exhibited.

*Work in progress* both demonstrates and stretches the idea of an event-body. The material remains 'in one general condition', it has undergone a number of transformative operations, but it retains both objecthood and eventhood. The biographical complexity accrued by the material through these operations is occluded; it can only show itself to be the *site* of the actions performed upon it; it *has been* braided, knotted, cut up, baled, stamped.

Here, the object-body is also site, the place that is occupied by action when something takes place. In archaeology, 'site' and 'ground' are almost synonymous, in fact, it is archaeology itself that performs the transformation from ground into site.

As noted by Tilley in the quotation in Section 5.1.1 above, memory can be an embodied, and therefore material, phenomenon, and it holds the relationship of material and time.

*Head of a jester, made in clunch, mid 14th century*

### 5.1.3 The body remembers: time as material

"When I'm digging out a ditch, it always comes to me that the last person who dug it was the person who made it." Mark Knight, archaeologist with the Cambridge Archaeological Unit, *pers. comm.* c.1996

That 'the last person who dug it' did so in the Neolithic (c.3,500 -2,500 BC) seems to



materialise this almost unimaginable expanse of time into the archaeologist's body. He stands in the place of the original digger of the ditch, 'outside' linear time, but also embodying it. This is cathected through 'the place he is in' (Lewis, 2000), but also through the specific bodily action in which he is engaged, a complex of physicality, sensuality and quality of attention. Engaged in excavation, the archaeologist's relationship with temporality is cut loose - literally 'within time', standing within matrix (a term for the material in which found items are embedded), stratigraphy (the layering of different grounds that belies the passage of time), he or she is also, as suggested above, 'outside' it. In this archaeological present it is the body that acts as a conductor of human temporality and is performed as a site of memory.

Matthew Goulsh, in a piece entitled *Memory is this* (2000b), discusses the act of remembering, of committing something to memory 'in the body' (ibid., p.8). Locating the process in imitation and subsequent repetition, he suggests:

"One changes through imitation, by making that which one imitates into a personal fact." (ibid., p.9)

Having but one opportunity to commit to bodily memory a dance sequence, Goulsh describes the effort to do so, by watching intently 'in the body':

"... I projected myself onto the stage and felt the strain and the rhythm of the choreography in my limbs as if I had already rehearsed it.

"As my body vibrated in my seat at the back of the second balcony, I felt obliged to acknowledge that now I am no longer the same man, that a new person is here beside me, a person whom I might, perhaps, be unable to shake off, whom I might have to treat with circumspection, like a master or an illness." (ibid., p.12)

Here, memory is constructed as an act of relational identity that is performed through the bodily imagination - a taking-in of the other. This process can be thought of as an extending, or even stretching, of imagination, a word that contains a concept of image that has the potential to restrict our thinking about it to the visual. Goulsh's attempt to remember what he can only watch by transposing his point of view to that of the person in motion causes him to imagine his own body as being differently composed in the



moment. To do this, he must imagine himself occupying the spaces he observes. Like the archaeologist in the ditch, Goulish puts his body in the place of this other in order for it to become the site of the memory of his dance.

*Six spirit figures. Dog-human and seal-human figures carved in ivory*

I do not mean to suggest that the introjection of the imagined or inferred actions of bodies in the past can be in any way imitative for the archaeologist, who cannot 'stand in' for a specific, visible other. The idea of repetition, however, is present in the labour of excavation, and this is also, as noted by Tilley, the work of memory. While archaeology does not reduplicate other actual *presences* by imitation, archaeological presence is always potentially complected by absence - which is the presence of the dead, who are absent in a specific and complex way that can allow for a repeated *re-presencing*, through the constitutive act of remembering (see Chapter Two above).

I would suggest that here lies archaeology's closest affinity with performance.

Mike Pearson characterises body-memory as an integral and inescapable part of self-formation, performed through moving through surroundings and encountering things in the world:

"We remember where and how to turn, to sit, to bend, to lean, to reach...when to stoop to avoid banging the head. Here is that network of contacts which our body remembers. ...

[T]hat house is there with us, in ways we barely discern ... We can never wipe the slate clean. For occasionally as we reach for an unfamiliar knob, we unlock the familiar cupboard of memory, of all those other times ...

" (Pearson/Brookes: *The Man Who Ate His Boots...* 1998. Quoted in Pearson and Shanks, 2001, pp.140-141)

This is the 'habit' of inhabiting, of allowing things and the spaces between them to imprint themselves onto the body, engendering movements, postures, gestures that can become 'characteristic' - a way of being. The idea of training, in performance as much



as in archaeology, draws upon the body's ability to absorb knowledge, physical facts, in this way. The body fits itself in, navigates and estimates, is always 'reading' space and objects. Archaeology takes place on the physical scale of the human; the size of the monuments is itself in relation to the human body - they are to be seen, passed through, moved around, observed from distance and approached at close range.

*Totem pole. Haida Indian, from Tanu, Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia, Canada*

Archaeologists Fiona Campbell and Jonna Ulin (2004) emphasise in turn the continuous drawing of attention to things-in-place as the body moves over ground. Unable to rest or find a fixed point, because what is on the ground is itself spreading out 'limitlessly', diverging into stories and histories, changing roles and purpose, moving through multiple identities even as it is encountered. This is what they term the 'borderline', a state from within which archaeology is approached, generating physical response towards interpretation:

"... [W]e can feel how the story penetrates our bodies, how it forces us to respond, to react to the things told, forcing us to realise that an eventscape is always in a state of fluidity. That its depths and borders are in a constant process of transformation, moving in different directions according to the whereabouts of the spectator, according to [the] standpoint of her/his position in time and place, according to her/his life experiences, genealogies, geographical and social histories, memories and current life situations ... And as the voice of this story fades into our minds we feel dispositioned once again." (Campbell and Ulin, 2004, p.83)

Archaeology here is performative in its quality of response, the idea that 'what we see looks back' (ibid., p.80), and that it is relational and participatory, not acknowledging sharp divisions of object and subject, site and artefact, past and present. Necessarily located in bodily and sensory experience, Campbell and Ulin's project, in their jointly-written PhD thesis, *BorderLine Archaeology*, is to create a performative archaeology that is reflected through practice and writing-about-practice. Using performative writing



that itself seeks to engender bodily response - what they refer to as 'dispositioning' - through an immediacy of reference where language is evocative rather than mediative, calling up bodily sensation and images rather than ideas. It is, in a sense, *choreographic*, in that it traces and translates movement and experience, concerns which are themselves archaeological.

*False breasts. Worn by men for Naven or initiators spoken of as Nyame, 'mothers'*

### **5.1.3.i Dancing archaeology: some notes on Butoh**

Within performance itself, the postwar Japanese dance form of Butoh comes closest to articulating its affinity with archaeology. Its founder, Hijikata Tatsumi<sup>37</sup> was a native of the poor Northern agricultural region of Tohoku, Japan. Much of the distinctive physicality of Butoh comes from Hijikata's memories of the movements and bodily characteristics of people he moved among in his early life: the bow-legged gait and feet heavy with rice-field mud, or the strange twitching and jerking movements of toddlers tied to posts in farmhouses while their parents worked on the land (Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006; Holborn and Hoffman, 1987). Hijikata was profoundly resistant to the imposition of Western culture on Japan in the wake of its military defeat in World War II (he was born in 1928), in particular to what he saw as the dualist attitude to the body embedded in Western Cartesian thought. He saw a return to the ethos of what he called 'Tohoku-Kabuki' as essential to revitalising dance as a bodily practice. Kabuki was the popular, urban theatre form of Japan, originating in the Edo period (sixteenth century), and its low-born practitioners, often of peasant origin, were associated with particular access to the world of the spirits and the dead (Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, p11).

From this complex of ideas, the body of Butoh was imagined by Hijikata as a 'body of death', not the same as the poor tomb of the spirit of Pauline Judeo-Christianity, but a constantly-revived corpse, a repository of absences, a memorial and a 'standing-in'. This was famously articulated in Hijikata's formulation of Butoh as "a dead body standing

---

<sup>37</sup> Following Fraleigh and Nakamura (2006), I am using the Japanese form of family-name first.



desperately upright" (ibid., p.51).

After a period of withdrawal from public appearances during the 1970s, Hijikata re-emerged wearing his hair long and swept-up in a style he remembered from his mother and sisters. The latter were said to have been sold as children to enable the family's survival, and Hijikata believed their spirits to be dwelling inside him (Holborn and Hoffman, 1987: 14). He spoke about this in a written piece, *Kaze Daruma (Wind Spirit)*:

"I may not know death, but it knows me. I often say that I have a sister living inside my body. When I am absorbed in creating a butoh work, she plucks the darkness from my body and eats more than is needed. When she stands up inside my body, I unthinkingly sit down. For me to fall is for her to fall....She is my teacher; a dead person is my butoh teacher. You've got to cherish the dead." (Hijikata, 2000, p.77)

This is highly performative writing, and bespeaks a radical form of 'standing in' that is extremely pertinent to my discussion of the body in archaeology and performance. The idea that the living bear the dead inside them, are in some way 'inhabited' by them, and, ultimately, are interchangeable with them (Endo Tadashi, a teacher of Butoh whose workshop I attended, characterised his own teacher, Hijikata's collaborator Ohno Kazuo, as saying, "We carry the dead", but Hijikata as saying, "No - WE are dead...") provides a position from which to read the performing bodies in *in situ*:s *Without History*. I will discuss the company's specific use of Butoh in this piece in Section 5.3.2.

*Shadow puppet. Wilmana, the bird of evil tidings (usually)*

## **5.2 *Without History*: the performance: space, structure and tasks**

In *Without History*, the museum is 'itself' within the performance, insofar as its particular spatial configurations are 'performed'. The somewhat labyrinthine structure of the ground floor (archaeology) gallery and the high open spaces of the upper (anthropology) galleries are exploited through specific performance styles (secretive and



elusive, or declamatory and epic) and the nature of spectacle and intimacy that they seem to imply. The different acoustic spaces are also explored in this way.

Performance areas include the lift, the stairs, and CCTV screens visible from the entrance desk in the archaeology gallery. Another aspect in which the museum is 'itself' is of course its content – the archaeological and ethnographical collections of the University of Cambridge. These are not simply displays of individual objects of great interest, meaning and beauty, they sit within a dense web of discourse that cannot necessarily be teased out into clearly differentiated strands - the history of these disciplines, the academic and epistemological context in which they are embedded, including, of course, the colonial and imperial projects of the past (and their contemporary legacies), the history of museums, collections, and their display. This is simply to consider them within their present context – their original contexts, the source of their 'otherness' is, perhaps, an altogether different web of discourse...

*Without History* is a response to this site and its rich multiplicity of specifics. The performance itself, within, and about, such an environment, is an encounter between disciplines, and how what we know about them is discussed, mediated and performed.

The audience is both led on a specific trajectory through the space(s) – from ground to top floor and back down again – and is free to roam throughout the whole performance space, once each section is opened to them. If they so wish, they can ignore the performance itself and look at the museum's collections. As with other *in situ*: pieces, it is possible to concentrate on individuals, following their progress through the performance, or to haunt particular spaces and wait for the performance. In this way, the audience becomes a part of the 'siting' of the work. They are within each other's experience as much as the performers with whom they share the space. Being thus inside the performance, the audience responds to its own dramaturgy – movement of interest, lines of sight, light and acoustics can all be created and modified by spectators and performers equally.

The audience enters by the usual museum visitors' entrance, which is at ground level. In the CUMAA, the ground floor gallery is devoted to world prehistory and local archaeology (Cambridge and its environs from the Neolithic ['New Stone Age'] to the



nineteenth century). The groundplan of this gallery reflects its divisions into discreet geographical regions and themes ('animals', 'rock art' etc). This translates into a somewhat labyrinthine structure of 'corridors' and 'alcoves'. This is achieved solely by the arrangement of cases in what is essentially an only reasonably-sized single room. On entering this gallery, visitors are faced with a 'corridor' of cases stretching ahead of them, with alternative routes to the immediate left or right, past other displays. The entrance desk, with its CCTV monitors, faces them to their right. A museum invigilator/front of house assistant remained at the entrance desk throughout. Although there is a designated route through the gallery, starting at the entrance desk and proceeding to the right, the essentially unpartitioned nature of the space makes following this a matter of personal preference. For *Without History*, very little modification of this space was undertaken. A large television was situated at the far end of the display case 'corridor' immediately facing the entrance. In a side annexe, which leads to offices, teaching rooms and storage areas, but which nevertheless contains a display case on the theme of early agriculture, was placed a table with two chairs, three portable radio-cassette players and three archive boxes. No other material was introduced into the ground floor space, nor into the main anthropology gallery on the next floor. On the second-floor mezzanine level, in an enclosed 'corridor'-type gallery used for temporary exhibitions, usually with a photographic and/or audio-visual basis, *in situ*: installed three televisions, each with a chair facing. The main mezzanine, with balcony overlooking the anthropology gallery, was closed to the audience, although most of the area was visible from the open end of the gallery, and from the floor below. A second very large television was installed at balustrade height on one side of the mezzanine, so that it could be viewed from below.

On entering the archaeology gallery by the usual museum visitors' entrance, the audience encounters only two of the performers, Mark Sparrow and Colin Pinks, who appear to be 'attendants' of some sort. On a large TV screen at the end of the gallery, directly facing the entrance, there is a 'talking head' (Tim Waterfield), describing the imagined ruins of Capitol Hill, Washington DC, in two thousand or so years' time. Three 'guides' - Sakura Nishimura, Geoff Broad and Iain Coleman - and a cameraman, Pete Arnold, emerge from the lift and begin highly idiosyncratic 'tours'. Tim Waterfield,



accompanied by Steve Adams, enter the space as 'investigators' and begin private interviews on the subject of death, including their own preferred form of burial, with each guide in turn. Film taken by Pete as he follows the guides is relayed directly to the TV. After the third interview is completed, all performers join in a single vocalised chord that builds to a crescendo. The guides slowly leave the space, crawling up the stairs to the main anthropology gallery, stripping down to underwear as they make their ascent. The lift attendant (Colin) laughs at some private amusement. A wheelchair-bound lecturer, introduced by Mark as 'Dr H' (Brandon High), begins a lengthy discourse on the origins of the idea of 'race', but is frequently bullied and sabotaged by Mark's interventions. The 'guides' have taken up positions in the gallery and dance on the spot, writhing in slow motion, as if in pain. After they have been doing this for several minutes, Tim stops each in turn, taking them aside and quietly talking with them. There is another vocal crescendo from the whole company, and the guides ascend to the next level, the mezzanine gallery. Steve takes various physical measurements of each, they put on smart clothes, and they are then all three filmed as they take part in some sort of tribunal. Their faces appear in extreme close-up on the TV up on the mezzanine. After a final chord, they descend to the archaeology gallery. Mark and Colin vocalise together as they replace the cloths on the free-standing display cases. Down in the archaeology gallery once more, the guides have placed themselves as they described in their burial interviews. Steve appears on the downstairs TV screen, reading from an account of the final days of the 'last' Tasmanian. This is the end of the performance.

While the trajectory of the piece explicitly plays on the discourses of anthropology and ethnography, particularly in its mimicry of information-gathering and use of intellectual history ('Dr H's lecture is a 'straight' account of an idea and is firmly within the boundaries of academic discourse, although the disruptions to which his delivery is subjected are not), the archaeological other is more problematic. Anthropology, having a great investment in the observation of, and participation in, behaviour, is already bound into a discourse with performance itself, and it was part of the work of the piece to 'perform' this. Perhaps it is not surprising that so much of the textual material referred directly to the ethnographic. Alongside anthropology, as it is in CUMAA, the



archaeological gathers a certain stillness, the materiality of its objects seems daunting, unyielding. For *in situ*:'s work and its preoccupations - memory, mortality and the past - there seem to me to be strong affinities that bear examination.

### **5.3 The proximity of others: absence, silence and the body in *Without History***

A museum is not a 'found' site, in the sense that it exists somehow 'for itself'. It is the embodiment of the idea of a museum, an idea which is, if not contested, then certainly always under investigation, reformulation and reconstruction. We can legitimately ask where the museum resides; there would be no clear answer. Its building could be used for many other purposes, its collections and the individual objects in them do not themselves constitute a museum; these elements must be designated and deployed in a certain way - classified, arranged, displayed, labelled and explained. A museum is constituted by the relationship between its contents and the way they have been, and continue to be, approached by those who come into contact with them over time. To be in a museum is also somehow, as an object or artefact, to be by definition removed from some other context, a site of origin, or of immediate functional or ritual/symbolic relevance.

*His face is in close-up, against a red background. He speaks thoughtfully, as if he is imagining the scene just as he is describing it. He talks about Capitol Hill being a swathe of scrub, or grassland, with rubble. Or perhaps the ruins would be more grandiose, like the Rome upon which it is modelled, having crumbled through decay rather than been crushed by catastrophe. He is quietly animated; his hands, out of view, are gesturing as he speaks. People stop for a moment in front of the TV, then move off to the right or left, perhaps to see if there is anything else happening. One or two sit for a while and listen.*



In the popular imagination, the museum is bound up with what is past, over and done with. If we say that something is 'a museum piece' or 'should be consigned to a museum', we are making a point about its place in the world; it is perhaps worthy of preservation, but it is also redundant, it is no longer of the present, although it still exists in the present. If we propose putting a thing into a museum, we are effectively seeking to remove it from time because it has somehow for us ceased to 'be in time'; it has stopped changing. Following Lacan, Susan Stewart situates the relationship that the antiquarian makes between the present and the past in a disruption that first of all erases the past in order to turn it into something that can be 'collected' (Stewart, 1993, p.143). Not rubbish, such things still have value - perhaps they are beautiful or precious or have associations with famous people or important events, or they provide us with a reminder that things were not always as they are now.

Of course, museums differ greatly in their particulars; in their beginnings, aims and relationships all museums are highly specific. The Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology houses a particular set of objects, collected in particular contexts and under particular circumstances. It is bound up with the history and development of its two disciplines, and also with the study of museums itself. CUMAA is, in a sense, like a new performance piece in that it is always already 'about' what it is; in those heightened places where its exhibitions interrogate the activities of collecting and exhibiting, it becomes a museum 'of', or 'about', being a museum.

*Mark Sparrow is shuffling around near the entrance as the audience enters. He is slightly dishevelled, has his hands in his pockets, and looks at people as they come in. He might be waiting for someone. He addresses the audience directly, but with a sort of furtive discretion, as if he shouldn't really speak to them. He tells them the performance will be starting soon; he points out displayed objects in a casual, dismissive manner. He won't make more than momentary eye contact. He says, "There's going be a talk later ... Dr H. ... should be*



*interesting ... well, reasonably interesting." All the while he is exchanging glances with Colin, who is standing by the lift. Colin and Mark look as though they are up to something; they smirk. Sometimes Colin giggles a bit. He doesn't talk to the audience, just looks at them. Then he looks at Mark and smiles. The audience gradually move away from the entrance and into the gallery. A couple wait to see if Mark will tell them anything else.*

CUMAA is also a museum of human otherness, the dead and the distant. Adrian Heathfield has theorised performance as being in an intimate relationship with otherness (1997). Being both corporeal, sited in the body, and ephemeral, with its ontology of disappearance, its own, most intimate, other is Death itself (ibid. See also Phelan, 1993 and 1997). As we have seen, objects, like performers, are always standing in for bodies and events - their various becomings. A museum is also somewhere that is visited, moved through in specific ways. The presence of visitors is implicit in the layout of a museum, it is more or less ordered as a succession of displays and perspectives. A performance piece like *Without History* can overlay or underpin the performance of the museum; it can also work in proximity to it, alongside it. Within such a dynamic, the museum and the performance stand in for one another, as do audience and performers.

*Without History* was made in response to the museum, its spaces, its collections, and to the idea of the museum itself. At the risk of being obvious, the presence of performers puts bodies, movement and sound into relationships with these phenomena that are beyond or outside what is effected by the presence of unwitnessed visitors.

In this section I will discuss *Without History* in its specifics, with reference to the material in the opening section. I will begin by looking how the piece encountered the struggle to understand, make sense of and produce knowledge about its setting - effectively its efforts to be 'site-specific'. Examining the differing performance strategies, personae and tasks deployed to accommodate the scale and diversity of the stimuli, I will look at the ways in which the presence of performing bodies both



heightens and disrupts competing desires for representation, demonstration, interpretation. Following from this, I discuss how the performance effected the mapping of the event-bodies of museum artefacts onto performing bodies, and the subsequent re-formulation of the piece through this. Finally, I will examine the idea of sounding in the museum, including the presence of speech as another form of linguistic presence (alongside the writing of lists and labels), and the specific use of vocalisation within the context of *in situ*:'s practice as a whole.

*Suddenly there is shouting from somewhere. People are calling out, asking the audience to please follow them. There are two men's voices - one with a Scottish accent - and a girlish woman's voice. Some audience members laugh, the guides are so loud and insistent, too big and brash for the modest, academic archaeological displays. The woman is speaking Japanese and is wearing a short tartan skirt and a jumper with a fluffy teddy bear on the front. She has pom-poms in her hair. The three guides, Geoff, Iain and Sakura, seem to tumble through the gallery, collecting up little knots of followers. Geoff beckons vigorously to anyone that looks undecided, and calls to them to come and find out about human sacrifice in ancient Peru.*

*Over the top of this, or perhaps just underneath it, there is a sound like tropical birds hooting to one another.*

### **5.3.1 Imagining order**

If 'history' provides a structure for understanding events in the past, a narrative on which to base identity, then to be without it is somehow to be stranded in time, to have arrived at the present without the ability to explain or organise, without progress or achievement, without consciousness.



The piece takes its title from the anthropologist Eric Wolf's 1982 work, *Europe and the people without history*, an analysis of the colonial encounter as being between cultures who kept records using writing and those who did not. To be 'without' history can also mean to be 'outside' it, like prehistory, which of course does not know what is coming, does not know about its 'before-ness'. As mentioned in Section 5.1 above, one way of looking at (prehistoric) archaeology is as a way of getting an understanding of prehistory that affords it some equivalence to 'history', by 'reading' its remains, like texts and records. Victor Büchli, in a paper entitled, *Interpreting material culture: the trouble with text* (1995), noted that 'texts' produced or constituted by archaeological remains are not, and cannot be, singular and unitary, but partake of (?super-)post-modernity's proliferative nature; they are multivocal and plural. There are simply too many 'texts', and the work of archaeology must in part be to find ways to allow them all to be legible, if not actually 'read'. This proliferative quality stems from the very physicality of material artefacts:

"... [I]t is all the various permutations, fetishisations and recontextualisations which make material culture important. Its constituted physicality, ironically, is precisely what enables it to pass so freely from one context to another. You can pick it up and move it from a grave-site to a museum vitrine or buy it and use it as a flower-vase rather than a funeral urn. Precisely because it is rendered durable it can accommodate a great degree of ambiguity regarding its associative meanings ..." (ibid., p.85)

If the materiality of artefacts allows the slippage and dispersal of significance attached to them, then the human subjects who attribute this significance are also material bodies, physically occupying space. The particular embodied state of performance, is, as we have seen (Chapter Three above), one in which identities and 'becomings' are constantly in play. In *Without History*, the particular performative strategy of 'guiding' was revisited. In *Inferno*, the 'guide' allowed the audience to experience performers as mediating presences, presenting the environment, establishing something, and then constituting the performance itself by breaking this down in specific ways. In the museum, the guide stands between the audience and the collections, filtering the 'strangeness' of the objects through expertise. The guide 'speaks for' the artefacts in a



specific way, augmenting the often bare facts of the labels, adding anecdote, detail, enriching the discourse of evidence, interpretation, knowledge, narrative that the visitor would otherwise have to piece together themselves through a fog of unfamiliarity. A museum is already organised, labelled, displayed. It is designed to be 'read' in a way that, say, Durham cathedral, Oxburgh Hall and Birkenau are not. A guide to these places displays them, reveals what is not self-evident from the structures without expert knowledge of architecture or history. Medieval pilgrimage, Catholic resistance to the Reformation or industrialised mass murder cannot be inferred from moving through these spaces without recourse to language - reading guidebooks or listening to guides. The museum guide also promises 'something more' than is evident, a deeper level of knowledge, perhaps an 'insight', something derived from specialist knowledge or expertise. The museum guide, with a body and a voice, 'brings the objects to life'.

*"... so even an agricultural implement like this could serve as a lethal weapon under certain circumstances ..." "The victims were thrown off a cliff. Follow me now please, there's a clunch jester somewhere here ..." "An-i-mals! KAWA-II!!" Two men are standing at the entrance, one is carrying a hold-all; the other is very tall, he is wearing a huge overcoat.*

*No-one seems to notice them. People are talking loudly, and there is a sound like gibbons or birds calling to each other.*

Echoing the way in which Acting seems to seek to capture and define the evidence of emotion, and the meaning of gesture and behaviours to create a simulacrum of a person (see Chapter Three), the guide offers a version of events that becomes definitive, partaking of authority and the aura of expertise, a singular perspective, a path through the chaos of limitless associations, relations and signs.

The guides of *Without History* are anticipated in the space by two other performers



(Mark Sparrow and Colin Pinks), one of whom controls the lift, moving between floors. The other is a shady figure, to whom no authority will adhere; he seems to undermine the material, perhaps even the performance himself. Mark Sparrow presents a form of attention that seeks to efface itself, to cover its tracks before it is called to account. He disassembles. In giving information about the performance - that it will be starting soon, that there will be a talk later - he seems to conceal its beginning. In his presence, which lacks the commitment that would allow him to inhabit the present, there might not be a performance at all. We don't know what to think. Here is the museum; it is 'quite interesting', but why should it be? He stands near the entrance, not even 'at' the entrance, and seems to ask, 'what are you expecting?', as if it were strange to expect something. There is an awareness of time, but time as provisional. Somewhere between the archaeological material - this way the brow-ridged skulls and diagram-arrows of human evolution, that way the Roman mosaic pavement - that is the persistence of the past, and the promised performance, the present is inhibited, held at bay.

The emergence of the museum guides from Colin Pinks' lift, with their calls to follow and listen, is tumultuous, they seem to 'release' the performance, or the expectation of one. But they are swallowed up, concealed from each other, by the divisions of the space, its aisles and dead ends and alcoves. They seek attention, are insistent that they have something to say, that they can 'add to' the experience.

*Mark and Colin standing back to back. They are sounding long, deep notes. Sometimes they 'tune in' and make a harmony; sometimes one responds to the other, like a call and answer across a great expanse.*

In cutting in to the suspension of waiting, the guides reinstate a sort of order; now something has begun. Time has tightened up again, and there appears the possibility of narrative, where the careful sequence of themes and cultures will be respected if not adhered to. The guides take up the bodies, each gathering a cluster of audience members who have chosen to follow them. They are not playing authority figures, none assumes a donnish expertise; in fact they are more like neurotics who cannot help but



expose their private relationships with the material. They are authorities only on their own idiom (Bollas, 1992), and it is through this that they struggle to mediate the museum's displays. They have preoccupations, obsessions, are distracted, speak Japanese instead of English, talk about tiny, uninteresting details, like whether the label is discoloured. Sharing the space with the audience, endearingly concerned with keeping their attention, the guides come to stand in for the specific, idiomatic nature of interest and attention. They locate the desire for knowledge and its constitution in the same place - their porous, suspect bodies (see Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006: 51). These guides appear to have assumed authority, but are not up to it; what they know is only of use to them.

*Steve sits Sakura down at the table; he sits opposite her. He asks her to speak into the cassette recorder when she answers. He asks the questions, filling in the form:*

*When did you first become aware of death?*

*Is there any particular colour you associate with death?*

*How would you like to be buried?*

*Is there anything you would like to have with you in your grave?*

*When the interview is over, Sakura gets up and walks through the little knot of audience members standing watching or sitting on the step. She seems subdued. Steve carefully puts away the tape in an archive box.*

For the audience, the figure of a guide who might have some insight into the museum and its displays quickly recedes, replaced by a relationship with the artefacts and the space that is dynamic and mutually permeable. The guides are another object of interest, part of the museum re-imagined as flesh and blood.

The guides themselves become subject to investigation, are put on the 'outside', almost



as they are becoming objects of pity or curiosity or perplexity for the audience. The two investigators (Tim Waterfield and Steve Adams) arrive after enough time has passed for the guides' fragility to have emerged, and they stand waiting at the entrance for a while before beginning their work. Colin and Mark notice them, the audience, if they are passing, notice them, some stop to watch, to see what they will do. There is no question of Tim and Steve being taken for anything other than performers - Steve is wearing a black suit and is carrying a clipboard, Tim is in a huge overcoat, like one of Wim Wenders' angels in *Wings of Desire* (1987), and the performance takes place in June. They do not 'make an entrance'; like the beginning of the piece, they seem to have always been in waiting. Their appearance is almost gradual, as if they are materialising, solidifying in the space. Their presence adds another form of scrutiny; another perspective which may put the audience under observation, or implicate them in the experiment.

The investigation proves idiosyncratic and opaque, the nature of the information it intends to collect is unclear. The subjects are the guides, and the questioning and observation seems to make them less and less solid, they drift off, change the subject, spiral away into reminiscence and other narratives. These humane investigators affect them profoundly, if not directly. They show them photographs of their own faces and the guides are displaced from any remaining authority, they lose the attention they had commanded, eventually being dissolved in sounding that is itself cut loose from language and sign.

*Without History* begins with an attempted encounter with the discourses of knowledge, research and authority that are at play within the museum itself. Rather than seeking ways of reproducing or mimicking them through, for example, discovering hidden information, of the sort a real museum guide might present, or choosing a particular narrative thread to follow, the performers created idiomatic paths through the displays. Instead of resisting the development of fixations - human sacrifice, cuteness, weaponry and the capacity for violence - they cultivated them and sought out opportunities to 'act them out'. They were themselves from time to time, abandoning the apparent performance persona to talk about their memories, or they spoke learned text from



seemingly random sources (H.G. Wells, a contemporary novel about two corpses rotting on a beach, an account of the aftermath of the Hiroshima bomb).

Instead of guiding or acting, both activities of focus and concentration, the drawing of narrative, fact and character, the performers are caught up in the proliferation that the museum invites and also embodies. They associate limitlessly through their own sensory experience of the gallery spaces and encounters with artefacts. The constitution of knowledge here is fragile and subjective; it cannot be tested, yet it desires to be heard, to be repeated, to be in the world. As they follow one another around the space, audience and guides come face to face with the objects, assemblages and displays, and call up ways of seeing and experiencing them that yearn for, challenge, complement, resist and extend those that appear to be fixed and intended. This is achieved by the proximity of audience and performers, the interchangeability of status as subjects who are experiencing the museum as a form of displacement.

*Iain is pulling himself up the stone staircase. He is mostly using his arms, in a sort of commando crawl. Sometimes he struggles to his feet, but collapses again after a step or two. He is sweating and his long hair is hanging down in front of his face. He is describing one of Wells' Martians from 'The War of the Worlds', trying to recall the text as well as get up the stairs. Tim's voice says, "They used to have something they called money. It came in the form of plastic cards."*

The entry of speaking, moving (and sometimes moved) and remembering bodies into the space provides a second locus for the structured 'museum time' of human history and 'progress'. The performers, standing between the objects from the human past and the audience in the present, perform their capacity to reminisce - and to suffer from reminiscences - and to imagine a future that contains their own deaths, as the museum's archaeology galleries seem to house the memory and deaths of so many others. The



performers, as attendants, guides and investigators, 'standing in' for objects and audience, form an articulation that relishes the museum's own proliferative, porous and suspect body.

### 5.3.2 Object-body and event-body revisited

In *Without History*, the performers' personal responses to the environment of the museum and to its collections, as well as individual pieces, were formative of the fabric of the piece. As in the house-based work, early rehearsals concentrated on bodily habituation to the space, treating the museum as a whole environment. As we have seen, each articulated, performed or felt response places the performer in a relationship with material phenomena that is specifically embodied through that performer's own ways of moving, gesturing and negotiating space and bodies. Through this, they are also brought into relationship with the presences implied by the museum's objects and artefacts - the absent bodies of the past that are incorporated into the performance's network of relationships and associations. It is clear that within this relational economy of response, negotiation and adaptation, no singular, unitary or static state can be settled into by any performer; they remain becomings. In their capacity for multiple self-states, reminiscences, inhabitings, narratives and experiences, the performers 'stand in' for both the artefacts and their makers, users, finders, collectors - their own network of 'responders' in the past.

These artefacts are all part of the collections of CUMAA, which is now their site, part of their multiple histories and meanings. For Fiona Campbell and Jonna Ulin, their 'BorderLine' (see Section 5.1.3 above) is constituted by a responsive openness to an object or artefact *in situ*. It is the web of encounters embodied by this thing, now present in this place. It is also the self-state or mode of thinking into which the archaeologist enters in order to 'do archaeology'. They refer to this practice as 'performative' and link it explicitly with performance (Campbell and Ulin, 2004, pp.25-34). Identifying, as do Pearson and Shanks, that both performance and archaeology share concerns and practices that are not only to do with temporality and embodiment, but also with the formation of social identities and cultural production, Campbell and



Ulin seek to emphasise the context of the practitioner as constitutive of whatever is performed upon the site and its material (ibid., p.33).

In *Without History*, one of the contexts into which the performers are placed is that of the museum, its layout, displays, interpretations and labelling; what is and is not on view, what is 'known' or in question, reconstructions, speculations. The museum cannot be made invisible, as, in performing, the performers become part of its displays, they enter into its economy and discourse. As guides, they once again perform the desire for a structured narrative, accounts that have a beginning, a middle and an end, that lead somewhere, are 'satisfying'. They begin by trying to 'bring the past to life', by being live mediators of the information set out in the display cases, and perhaps therefore conforming to some sort of expectation of what a theatrical performance that takes place in a museum might be like. Maybe they will act out some event that may have taken place, using 'props', based on the objects in the cases? But it becomes clear very quickly that they are not competent to do this; they cannot stay put, they are all over the place, they appear to be, like the protagonist in *Father, can't you see I'm burning...*, engaged in an impossible attempt to 'get it all at once'. They are also themselves objects of research and observation, and subject to what appear to be bodily 'fugues', changes of habitation and constitution. These performers are indeed in the 'BorderLine', unable to settle into a desire or an identity or a particular kind of body, but instead entering into a complex of associations and relationships that are continually dispositioning and repositioning and reconfiguring them.

*Iain, Sakura and Geoff are in a row, about a metre or more apart. They are moving slowly on the spot, agonised. They look as though they are trying to struggle free of something that is enveloping them.*

*Mark shouts at 'Dr H' to "Speak up. No-one can hear you."*

Within *in situ*.'s work as a whole, over most of the performances under discussion in



this thesis, this tension between the desire to signify, organise, be a character, tell one story instead of hundreds, and the proliferative, chaotic complexity of time and material. of performance itself, is always the starting point. The performer's primary task is therefore always 'within the task', to allow what they are trying to do - tell a story, show the audience around a flat, perform a play - to be permeable and subject to displacement by material both external and internal to them. Through this, the spatial context of the performance is brought into play as being 'live', that is, that what takes place, whether by accident or design, or the nature of its environment (temperature, light, noisiness, emptiness or crowdedness etc.) is part of the performance and can influence what happens. The audience, of course, sharing the same space and moving around it freely, become part of this. *in situ*: performers do the work of performance regardless of whether they are aware of anyone watching them, but this work is nevertheless affected by the presence and proximity (or otherwise) of the audience, who become part of the complex of influences, who have entered the 'BorderLine' with them. It is, however, important to remember that the audience are *not* performing, and it is this space, the space of difference (or Derridan *différance*, the endless deferral of fixed meaning) that articulates the sign, that 'standing in' takes place.

The audience, however, is never the sole and privileged subject of standing in; the performer is always already becoming others, being transformed by the images and stories that the dynamics of the performance has set in play. The body of an *in situ*: performer is therefore as much the 'site' of performance as the place they are in.

*Tim sits down beside Geoff in the gallery. He sits very close to him and speaks very softly. He asks Geoff to describe to him what a headache feels like. The conversation is very intimate; a few people draw close to hear what is said. There is a giggling sound coming from the lift.*

The idea of a body that carries within it other bodies and places is central to the aesthetic



of Butoh. Despite the highly-specific contextual complex from which it emerged, the practice(s) of Butoh are articulated in such a way as to be applicable and adaptable in a number of other performance contexts. In early rehearsals in the archaeology galleries of CUMAA, among the multiple narratives with which performers quickly became engaged were those of the rise and fall of cultures and civilizations, and the attendant effects of human destructiveness. Images of ruined cities and the aftermath of war led us to our own remembered fears of nuclear annihilation in the 1980s, and thence to the images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with their vocabulary of white shadows, scorplings and dust. This is part of the context of Butoh, part of the seared ground it dances on, and its slow, agonised movements seemed to reflect some of the physical vocabularies that were beginning to emerge in *Without History*.

Throughout the first part of the performance, the museum guides appear more and more porous and unstable, they are no longer playing characters, but seem to be taking on a succession of states brought about in response to encounters with their environment, including museum artefacts and other performers, particularly the two investigators. To me, as director, and later observing them as part of the audience, they seem to be somehow caught, held in suspension between an infinite number of states, and this tension is performed through the body.

The body in Butoh, so memorably characterised by one of the form's founders, Hijikata, as 'dead', can be seen as the site of a number of conflicting and complementary forces that drive it, not by coming from outside, but rather by being internalised and allowed to inhabit, possess and articulate the dance. This body becomes a particular kind of object, an event extended over time; it both accepts and resists its own disintegration. Like the past, it is absent, and yet stubbornly present in the materiality of its remains. The slow, unbalanced, rooted and wracked body of Butoh does not so much dance as *persist*.

The *Without History* guides are bodies that are on the verge of exhaustion from their attempts to keep within one discourse, while allowing so many others to inhabit them. Going up the stairs to the next level of the museum, the next part of the performance, they surrender verticality and bind themselves to the ground, crawling slowly, sometimes vocalising, without language, sometimes speaking, stopping altogether to



shed articles of clothing. Some recent choreographical theory, most notably André Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance* (2006), has interrogated the 'being-towards-movement', which includes speed, apparent purpose, fluidity and continuousness, and verticality itself, as being both productive and indicative of, colonial relationships with ground and temporality (ibid., p.17). These thoughts reference the idea of a 'politics of the ground' (Carter, 1996), which it is suggested, is the awareness of colonialism's 'leveling of the ground' in order to clear a space for itself through the erasure of the multiple spaces it declines to know<sup>38</sup>. Disruptions of colonialism's accepted forms of cultural representation (in this case verticality, agility, ease of movement over space and time) can therefore bring into play a critique sponsored by the presence of its subjugated and erased spaces, and by extension, the bodies that might have occupied them. This seems to me to relate back to the origins of Butoh as the dance of bodies that resist the encroachment of other forms that are deemed invasive or occupying, specifically Western classical dance with its insistence on the vertical and aerial. The incorporation of bodily images of suffering and melancholy is also vital to this implied critique (Lepecki, 2006: 15-18; 106-122).

*Mark tells 'Dr H' (Brandon) to "Shut up" and wheels him out of the gallery and onto the landing. He tips him out of the wheelchair, so that he sprawls on the stone floor. He tells Brandon to "Get up them stairs" as he takes the empty wheelchair to the lift. He smiles at Colin, who is sitting on the floor of the lift, convulsed with laughter.*

The 'return of the repressed' in the form of the subjected bodies of the colonial projects, the academic disciplines and modes of cultural production (including theatre and dance) those projects helped to develop (even if they did not invent them) became one of the central themes of *Without History*. Despite this, the performing bodies continued to be objects and sites, event-bodies, throughout the piece. The guides ended their

---

<sup>38</sup> I find a strong echo here of Alan Read's discussion of Peter Brook's idea of 'the empty space' in *Performance and Everyday Life* (1993). Read notes that to designate a space as 'empty' is to erase its history in order to colonise it through the theatrical (see Chapter One).



performances in the lower, archaeology, galleries, where they had begun, exhibited alongside their alternative bodies (the objects on display), imagining their own interment. In this way, they are explicitly 'archaeologised', in the way that the bodies of executed criminals and social outcasts were 'anatomised' (Barker, 1984); they join the museum, the ranks of the dead.

### 5.3.3 Silence and multi-vocality

Museums, like art galleries, are usually associated with quiet, often compared with the reverential quiet of churches. The artefacts, paintings and sculptures speak for themselves. But they speak without sound, without voices. Even objects whose purpose is to sound are silent in museums - the Quai Branly, which houses the collections of the former Musée de l'Homme, in Paris, and the Horniman Museum in South London, have galleries devoted to musical instruments whose materiality is evident, but whose sonority is available only via recordings playable in booths or on computers, discreet to avoid cacophony. If they are not too fragile, the instruments may be played at special events and demonstrations, but, for most of the time, like other objects in a museum, we can only look at their shapes and construction and imagine their other sensory effects. The aesthetic of the museum seems to re-assert the domination of the visual.

*"They stole our children and brought them up in their own culture."*

*"They brought diseases to which we had no resistance."*

*"They gave us beads and knives and took our hunting grounds."*

*"They refused to give us food unless we worshipped their god."*

*Their faces are in close-up, but far away, on the balcony.  
They seem sad and exhausted, not defiant. People in the*



*audience look up at the screen above their heads, as high as  
the totem pole opposite.*

Where there are voices in the museum, they are always speaking, enmeshed in language. They are the voices of guides and interpreters, adding detailed information, background, colour, talking about what cannot be seen; compensating for the outrageous silence of the objects.

The unbearable silence often gives rise to the specific performances geared to bringing to life - re-enactments or reconstructions where we see the objects in use, and the people using them are dressed up in historical costume and explaining what they are doing. This is what constitutes heritage performance, and it partakes of the complex of 'standing in', in that it recognises that the artefact was once connected to human activity and had a place in a physical universe that put it in direct contact with bodies. It is taken to follow from this that it can be understood by simply replacing the imagined body of a person in the past with a performer in the present engaged in the inferred activity, using the object. The artefact is thereby resurrected, brought to life. The voice of the contemporary user stands in for the voice of the object; in being used, demonstrated, it speaks. It is given language, or rather put into language in a way just labelling it cannot do, and can thus make sense.

In *Without History*, the museum artefacts are outside language; if they are texts they are palimpsests with multiple erasures and re-inscriptions - the sound would be a crowded waveband, or like an immense flock of geese passing overhead.

*in situ*:'s vocal practice encompasses work that is outside or 'without' language. In *Without History*, performers' voices entered the space alongside, and in the same way as, their bodies, struggling to signify and represent, and in the process allowing other presences, hauntings, possessions and standings-in (see Chapter Four above). While we can always knowingly imagine, impose or create singular meanings using descriptive language that we allow gesture to follow, as in the heritage reconstructions described



above, sound itself has its own ontology (Ihde, 1976; Connor, 2000).

Vocal sound both indicates and creates 'presence' in the form of 'vocalic bodies' (Connor, 2000: 36). It can enter space, filling and punctuating it as a multiple presence, that, unattached to language, delivers the presence of bodies that are not legible in their specifics, but are free-floating, adhering to and detaching from other phenomena within the performance space.

The two subversive attendants (Mark Sparrow and Colin Pinks) that began, or rather concealed the beginning of, the performance, supply the vocalic bodies of the piece. Working separately and together, they create a vocal landscape in which the performance is located; they effectively make a ground of performance that is as porous and proliferative as the bodies moving through it. When they operate in language, they seem to seek to undermine what might be imagined as the museum's status as an authority and conduit of accurate facts about the world, in particular the world(s) in which its objects originate. They tell us that there are 'other museums' (Mark Sparrow), just as there are unlikely stories (the more unlikely for their familiarity) about what 'we' did to 'them' (Colin Pinks, unable to contain his hilarity: "We captured a missionary and cooked and ate him").

These words are themselves undermined - they are already laughing. If one is not in on the joke, this is unsettling; the two attendants are no more reliable than the guides; they too readily seem to enter another reality, abandoning language altogether. Perhaps one of the questions they ask concerns what we are expected to believe, in both senses; is it funny that people might think such things (the missionary story), or that it might be assumed that they do?

The lyrical quality of the attendants' work in turn undermines their personae-in-language; like the guides, they seem to shift utterly between one and the other, the only difference being in their ability to 'retrieve' themselves, not being affected or retaining the memory of their 'becomings'. In fact, they are themselves a memory of a previous phase of rehearsal, where fragmentary and unrecognisable snatches of song or speech drifted across the upper gallery space from the mezzanine level. This rather literal, but nevertheless extremely evocative, effect of lost voices of the past and distant, was



incorporated into the attendants vocal work throughout the piece.

Finally, vocality was used to create, or at least mark out, a temporal structure within the piece. Each of the three sections ended on a vocal crescendo, which included every voice, initiated by the principal investigator (Tim Waterfield). These chords lasted for several seconds, and had the effect of gathering the space together after its dissipation, of re-materialising the performance and returning it to a ground from which it could emerge re-configured. At the end of the sound, there would again be the silence of the objects, of the museum, and the performers' bodies re-situated, resolved, as the locus of the performance.

*There is a murmur of voices, very quiet and intimate; it comes from the tape recorders. Sakura is in a foetal position on a piece of white cloth. On the tape she is saying she was born in Mino, Japan. There is a painting of some cherry blossom propped up beside her.*

*Geoff is sitting in a chair. His voice on the tape is explaining the importance of the David Gray CD on the floor by his feet - something to do with his children. Iain is stretched out on a dark grey cloth. On the tape he is saying something about dust.*

### **Concluding remarks**

In *Without History*, CUMAA was not treated primarily as a collection of stories embedded in objects that are ancient and/or exotic, embodying difference and otherness. *in situ*: chose instead to engage with the multiple and proliferative nature of this otherness, to perform the struggle to imagine it at the limits of representation, and to



treat the museum as material, in the sense in which archaeology makes its object. That is, it has a physicality that is also constituted by relationships, associations and connections that are not material and visible.

Consequently, the site-specific nature of the piece was derived from the multiple presences of the performers *in relationship* with the spaces and displays of the museum, and with the audience that also moves among them. In this sense, the body entering space is always already the site of performance, and it is, as we have seen, in relationship with the material of performance (in this case CUMAA) as well as with the audience.

Within this context, the idea of a sensorium, here constituted by a network of bodily proximities and the production of sound, was crucial to the spatial economy of the piece. The nearness of performers and audience emphasised the separation of both from the museum's objects, by glass and other barriers (ropes etc.). It is this that quite literally materialises the relationality of people and things - it in fact performs it, emphasising that, even (or especially), within an explicit discourse of otherness, performance as a bodily practice is engaged in by both performers and audience.



## Conclusion

### **Performance as relationship: memory, materiality and process in the site-specific practice of *in situ*:**

*Before I started work on this thesis, when in situ: were making the performances I use as the basis for this research, I began to experience difficulties in describing the work we were doing to people who were outside it. 'Performance', I discovered, is not a term that can be used with any confidence with regard to what it might conjure up for the listener. 'Theatre' seems to have the opposite problem, producing a remarkably coherent complex of imagined activities, images and associations. Terminology, definitions, the whole science of the comparative, does no justice to practice. After a very long time, it dawned on me that the way to approach it was by simply describing what happened, what we did and what the audience might do in response. To some extent this involved the formulation of a vocabulary that was simultaneously, and necessarily, both descriptive and analytical. This not only made it possible for me to talk about in situ:'s work, it also allowed conversations about it to take place with people who hadn't experienced it, with people who never go to the theatre, and with people who do go to the theatre from time to time. My point here is that finding a way of observing something, and articulating those observations so that someone else can make use of them, is almost to discover it again by 'making an other of oneself'.*

The preparation and writing of this thesis has allowed me to reconfigure at least some part of *in situ*:'s practice as writing, and this reconfiguration echoes the work of conversion that is constitutive of performance - of idea and emotion into gesture, sensation into image. Writing is work that has allowed me to think about the relationship between description and theory in performance, and to develop from that thinking something that is concrete enough to be moved through, that suggests new openings and associations - still other ways of approaching the work, ideas about where it might lead, what the next piece of work might be. Because it is written to be read by others, it becomes a way of showing the reader ways in and out of the work, of inviting



him or her to use it, make associations with it, incorporate and alter it in whatever ways their own practice and thinking presents. Writing puts into place particular ways of thinking about performance that are bound into a particular practice, or set of practices. In the course of writing, of thinking through writing, I have reflected upon the importance of distance in the company's performance practice, and upon the nature of the materiality of our performance. This has allowed me to place *in situ*:'s specific practice within a complex of relational networks that knit together embodiment in time, objecthood and event. In doing this, I have located the intrapsychic work of identification - that is, the taking-in and taking-on of different forms of subjecthood and, through the responses they elicit, incorporating them into newly-formed or developing self-constructs - at the centre of our performers' practice. This lead in turn to an exploration of the ways in which I experience performance as playing out internally-experienced roles and relationships, including how the experience of emotion can be constructed through bodies and things.

Undertaking a thesis that centres upon work already performed, and made without knowledge of its own use, its own afterlife, confers in its distance a peculiar stance: it proposes theory itself as a formation of memory. It situates the work within a way of thinking about it, binds it into the ideas it has produced. Writing is *in proximity* to the performance that forms its subject, and it makes visible the work of distance that allows us to see beyond the blur of the intimate. This can only come after the experience, because it is a re-articulation, a processing through language, a stepping-back to allow others to stand alongside me.

The five *in situ*: performances discussed in the thesis can be analysed in certain ways. I have chosen to approach them as a means of addressing questions which arose for me as I began to reflect upon the process of making and performing them. The organisation of the thesis therefore highlights these central concerns: the relationship and status of the audience and performers *vis-à-vis* the space of performance (including the nature of site-specificity as it refers in particular to *in situ*:'s work in the house), the nature and role of materiality and its relation to memory, the constitution of the performer's presence, the



work of text, imagination and the representation or construction of emotion. It bears repeating that the work, the performances, came before the thesis. They are ways of saying what *in situ*:'s performances might or could be doing for performers and the audiences that witness them.

Chapter One constitutes my reflection on my work with *in situ*: as an inquiry into the role of the audience through a practice that highlights its role and presence. In *in situ*:'s work, the relationship between performers, audience and environment takes on a collaborative and relational nature as a particular experience. The domestic context allows me to make both an open reading of performance space, as that in which performance takes place, and to reflect on the quality of difference or otherness for itself, without having the nature of that difference specifically laid out through design changes or explicit interventions in the space. In this context I experience my performing and directing as not only a negotiation of, and within, shared physical space, but as a form of emphatic encounter with otherness. This is achieved through an often subtle play of psychic distance and corporeal proximity. The reflexive potential of performance for me, expressed through its accessibility to thought and to writing as an experiential mode, is rooted in the bodily presence of performers and audiences. My reading of *in situ*:'s practice shows me that this encounter marks otherness, even as my experience of audience/director-performer proximity plays upon identification and recognition. It is the separateness-in-presence of the performance that seems to me in turn to expose the otherness of others. As an audience member, even if I am also director, I am able to see myself and therefore perform my spectatorship through choices that make visible my recognition of the effects of performers' actions. From this experience I characterise the performer-audience relationship as one of negotiation, a relational strategy that is produced by the performance as it unfolds.

In the second and final chapters I reflect further on this to consider how *in situ*:'s performance practice also re-configures its *environment* as a relationship. In recalling the processes and practices of making *Father, can't you see I'm burning...* (1998-2000) and *Without History* (2001-2002), I became engaged with the ways in which my own personal and intellectual histories become bound into the work of performance. In particular, it is through writing that I articulate these relationships and their presence for



me in the remembered work. They become, as I write, a part of the performances, differently configured because brought out of the mode of experience. I now read the performances through these histories, which are configured as personal encounters with psychoanalytic and archaeological theory. Following specific lines of thought from these perspectives, it has been possible to offer a reading of *in situ*:'s site-specific performance practice as engaging with a world of material through the experience of embodiment, and with temporality, through memory and identification, and this engagement is entwined with my own idiom, as performer, director, audience member. Such a reading allows me to see my performance practice as being always at work connecting the corporeal - being material in a material world - and the psychic - memory, signification, imagination. My engagement with psychoanalytic theory, specifically the field of Object Relations, and the formulations of Transference and Countertransference, creates for me a relational environment of performance in proximity to, and in affinity with, the practice of psychoanalysis. I have drawn the two together as placing under scrutiny the dynamics of relationship *as it takes place* - a series of evocations, where performers and audience members alike call up states, feelings, atmospheres and ideas for one another. Within this, I have identified the role of material objects as performatively active in their engagement with the inner worlds of those who use and encounter them, including always myself, and this resonates with their presence in the outside world. Through my encounter with contemporary archaeological theory that addresses the proliferative nature of material text, I experience *in situ*:'s performance as capable of addressing and exploring the relationship of objects, human bodies and events to the passage of time, the effects of decay and dissolution/disappearance, and the presence and expectation of death. For me, the performance practice of *in situ*: makes use of a play of proximity and separation to acknowledge the otherness of temporal and cultural distance. Its engagement with the materiality of bodies, space and sound (including language) affords an evocation of the particular complex of presence and absence inherent in the fragments, residues and remains of past human activity.

The third and fourth chapters, in dealing more overtly with the relationship of *in situ*:'s practice to my experience of other contemporary performance and to what is often



thought of as the theatrical, raised important questions for me concerning the status of representation in *in situ*:'s work. By this I do not mean so much the difficulty or impossibility of representation, but rather how we acknowledge and work with the our desire for representation, or the expectation that it might, or should (at least) be attempted. I suggest that Acting is central to the play of desire within the processes of self-formation and dissolution engaged in by performing subjects. Evoking its influence and presence allows the complexity and instability of performative presences to be foregrounded. A corollary to this is an examination of the role of the human voice *as a material presence* within the cultural context of contemporary performance, where practices working with postmodern idioms (including *in situ*:'s) may be uneasy about emotional presences ('no to moving and being moved' - Rainer, 1965). In *in situ*:'s practice, voicing text is approached as a particular use of the material of performance. It is not performed, but rather performance acts upon it. When text is placed alongside the material of performance - bodies, voices, movement, space - it is removed in *in situ*:'s work from its privileged position as carrier of the performance's whole sense and structure, allows an exploitation of the evocative potential of language itself. This affords me readings of images and events in terms of the live dynamics of what is taking place. Text and voice are dissociated from the labour of representation and mimesis of a reality that is elsewhere. These are issues that are raised by my examination of *in situ*:'s practice, and they have highlighted areas that I have perceived to be left unaddressed in contemporary performance practice.

This thesis itself also stands in for the early work of *in situ*:', which is otherwise undocumented. Such a record is a product of organised thinking about *how* to document work that is already in the past. This in turn necessitated the development of a particular structure in my own intellectual approach to the body of work. Surprisingly perhaps, investigations of audience practice are notably lacking, particularly in the field of site-specific performance. Recent work by Cathy Turner (2004a; 2004b) and Fiona Wilkie (2002a; 2002b) have gone some way to redressing this, with Cathy Turner in particular offering an outline of a theory of audience practice that refers to Winnicott's Transitional Phenomena (Winnicott, 1971). In this, the audience are creatively engaged



in a 'third space' between self and other, past and present, external and internal, narrative and experience (2004a). Her work refers to an outdoor environmental performance and does not examine closely the effect of performer-audience physical proximity and the consequent identificatory dynamic. Although Blau (1990), on whom I have drawn heavily in the first chapter, addresses the concept of distance as in some way constitutive of the audience relationship, in working with the experience of *in situ*:'s specific practice, I have had to use other ways in in order to investigate the difference of approach it constitutes. This has entailed something of a deconstruction of the concept of distance, in terms of both practice and philosophy. Undertaking a thesis affords such opportunities. It provides a focus for thinking about how I might theorise my own practice, and, by extension, begin to approach the work of others., It gives an account of experience that is moving beyond a mere detailed description.

Relevant work has shown me important ways in, or rather ways out, from my position inside the work. Pearson and Shanks (2000), for example, provided an important, even crucial, entry point into the overlapping thematic preoccupations of archaeology and theatre/performance. *in situ*:'s work, however, seemed to indicate to me a more fundamental connection, one that was bound into what I perceived as affinity between practices that are always knitting together embodiment, event, identification and memory. John Freeman's (2002) and Tim Etchells' (1996) articulations of the nature of the performing subject indicated to me a position from which to explore the notion of Acting and its importance as an imagined trope of the performative that also functions as an object of desire.

My insights have been reached by *re-activating* my relationship to the performances in question, and to the relationships created in turn through the work itself - between audience, performers and space, and between bodies, material and the ephemerality of identity and event. This offers insights into performance only insofar as it can be *experienced*. By this, I mean that the thesis provides an approach to practice for performance-maker and audience that is based on the encounter between these two positions *as it is happening*.



I have referred to an absence of critically-informed writing, by professional practitioners or academics, addressing in particular the issues of proximity and presence with which I have been able to deal here. Within the academic environment, performance practice runs the risk of becoming theory-driven, that is, bound up with the testing, or even the attempt to demonstrate, prescribed theoretical constructs. The performances described in this thesis have happened, and are nourishing work that is still happening, within a professional practice. This has produced a complexity and density of both material and analysis of this under-theorised area. The work described here is built upon a continuous, investigative training, drawing upon other professional practices and a variety of performance experience, including of course, *in situ*:'s own. The five analyses produced here have emerged from a living practice that demonstrates an engagement with levels of intellectual and conceptual commitment necessary for any attempt to do justice to the complexity of the performative.

In providing a detailed description of *in situ*:'s unique body of work, not otherwise available, it must also stand as a record of that work. Written, as I have noted, from the inside, it is in some sense a record of the experience of practice and process, as well as (for want of a better word) product. The reader is able to stand outside, where I cannot, and is furnished with enough information to formulate his or her own vision of the work, to create a perspective that is different from mine, a perspective I cannot provide.

I have sought to describe the processes of the company's performance-making as a reflection upon the relationship of stimuli, ideas, source material, associations, contingency and accident. This offers the reader an account of a particular set of themes and preoccupations, together with descriptions of how they might be brought into play in performance-making, how they are changed from ideas to material and bodily presence within a particular practice. The contribution of the thesis lies as much in this provision of a detailed account of a practice as in the theoretical developments I have been able to make from it. I have used the practice of *in situ*: to think about performance, and my own relationship to it, itself existing within a complex network of relationships - inter- and intra-personal, and with practices outside itself and my encounter with them. While this may be considered in terms of what Nicolas Bourriaud



has termed 'Relational Aesthetics' (Bourriaud 1998 [English translation 2002]), I do not see it as a theory of judgement (Bourriaud 1998 [2002]: 112), but rather as a way of drawing practitioners and audiences into an economy of performance as a relationship with the material of the world and its potential to carry the imaginary, the absent, the transitory. In drawing attention to the human subject in specific ways, as a body in space, in proximity to others, as a material presence, part of the sensory environment, *in situ*:'s performance makes use for me of demonstrable connections with the world. This in turn sponsors the use of the concrete, the visible and tangible, as symbolic constructs through which the inner worlds of audience and performers are produced and known. Through this, performances are inhabited and animated by multiple psychic and imaginal experiences that are cathected through material.

My re-encounter with the work of *in situ*: situates the locus of our site-specific practice as an exploration of the possibility of specific *kinds of* spaces, rather than using the specificity of a particular environment, as in the work of Brith Gof.<sup>39</sup> The house performances both expose and exploit the resonances of their setting without resorting to either literal translation (in the sense of "this is Cawdor Castle - here are the stairs, here is the banqueting hall..." and so on) or a flattening out that would amount to a denial or rejection of the space as it is. The practice, or rather the description of it as it stands here, allows us to imagine site-specific performance as an imaginal transformation of existing places that can 'stand in' for other locations, rather than a set of practices that need always be bound to the particular. This binding to the particular can be a valuable approach which frequently allows for a strong collaborative element, often with the specific communities concerned - I am thinking of pieces like the recent *Bunker Project* by Metis Arts in Cambridge<sup>40</sup>, where local residents were recorded describing 'secret' sites associated with civil defence during the Cold War. The acts of curatorship and organisation in such works often serve to discipline the heterotopic tendencies of place in order to 'tell stories' or attempt to create, or even 're-create', specific contexts for actions and images. *in situ*:'s practice begins elsewhere, and the 'specificity' of the site is produced by the performance, rather than forming its inspiration. The specifics of domestic space are, however, always present as potential -

---

<sup>39</sup> See Mike Pearson's descriptions in Pearson and Shanks (2001).

<sup>40</sup> [www.metisarts.co.uk](http://www.metisarts.co.uk)



its associations with the body, the intimate and with personal histories, as well as its cultural particularities.

My use of insights from psychoanalytic practice has sought to exploit a specific discursive form that examines the inner relational worlds of individuals as they impact upon them in their lived environment, including their encounters with others, with places, with objects, with events. As with archaeology, I have emphasised what for me is the performative nature of such a practice. I have proposed that the dynamic of proffered event/environment and response sets up a unique set of circumstances which can be understood through the psychoanalytic concepts of Transference and Countertransference, themselves responses to phenomena that have called up private and idiomatic inner worlds or self-states. This is the case for both audience and performers in a shared space, sponsoring a concentration, a *formation of attention*, that becomes the performing environment. This is heightened by the domestic environment, where, as we have seen, rooms and other spaces, as well as fixtures and fittings, are deployed 'as they are', altered from moment to moment through the events and atmospheres of the performance.

The company continues to work, under the same directors (Richard Spaul and myself), and with a gradually shifting personnel<sup>41</sup>, although the sense of a core of collaborators remains. Ideas and themes discussed in this thesis continue to be developed as *in situ*: itself moves out of the formative period described herein. While the domestic space remains central to the company's practice, it also provides a sort of framework or paradigm for other site-based work, as suggested by *Without History* in Chapter Five. The practical performance work described here, and the theoretical material dependent upon, and deriving from, it, suggests to me two main foci of research.

The first is in the area of what can broadly be described as 'otherness', and its relationship with ideas of intimacy and proximity. Allowing the audience to share the space with the performers, and move around among the material of the performance, can be used to create different forms of relationship, on both sides. In *in situ*'s 2004 piece, *Mirabilis*, the elements of the performance were fragmented into a form of installation,

---

<sup>41</sup> Only Steve Adams (*Dec.*, *TMP* and *WH*) and Mark Sparrow (*WH*) are currently regular collaborators; Sakura Nishimura (*WH*) is an occasional performer.



and two of the three performers behaved in a manner that set them apart from the audience, the third having withdrawn after an initial approach. *Mirabilis* was derived from the hallucinatory imagery of Medieval hagiography, and performed in disused, and often remote, churches in East Anglia. The sparseness of the piece's directly communicative elements allowed audiences to enter a less mediated space than had been the case in earlier pieces. Their own presence was thus reinforced, through having to make conscious choices about where to go and what to look at and listen to. At the same time, we (Richard Spaul, Pete Arnold and myself) as performers remained unreachable and 'other', not readily amenable to identification and recognition. A theoretical investigation of the issues raised by taking practice further in this direction would entail a timely engagement with performance as an ethical practice.<sup>42</sup> The nature of psychic distance, in the sense of the maintained separation of audience and performers, counterbalanced by physical proximity within the live has the potential to evoke a heightened awareness of the embodied actuality of others, their different presences. The potential, and on many occasions, responsibility for separation, through moving away, not looking or listening, becoming distracted, is always tempered by the possibility of identification, sympathy or recognition - or, perhaps more importantly, the striving or desire for any or all of these things. Such an investigation resonates with some contemporary thinking in archaeology (McFadyen, 2007) regarding the difference and otherness of people in the past, and the tension with the intimacy of a common (experience of embodied) humanity.

It would also be interesting to explore further the work and role of the site of performance, perhaps by using larger-scale environments and timeframes. Central to this would be the effects of perspective, distance and ideas of nature or artificiality on the experiences of intimacy, immediacy and otherness. *in situ*'s very recent (June 2007) piece, *Metamorphoses*, based on the transformation -narratives of the Roman poet, Ovid, took place in a country park just outside Cambridge. While performers told specific stories, narrative structure and attempts at representation were eschewed in

---

<sup>42</sup> Ramsay Burt, in *Judson Dance Theater: performative traces* (Routledge, 2006) has engaged with the work of ethical philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) and Simon Critchley to develop a re-formulation of the political in dance practice.



favour of a journey or movement through different environments undertaken by the audience, led by an unreliable guide<sup>43</sup>. Performers by turns became absorbed into, assimilated and overwhelmed by the landscape, as they stumbled into the distance, howled like wolves/dogs or were only heard running or crashing through undergrowth. Further practice, writing and thinking in these areas would expand and give more definition to ideas of the materiality of performance, as something that is both done on things (texts, ideas, bodies, sites) and a practice of conversion of phenomena into bodily experience (as in the hysteria of Freud's case histories).

The work of *in situ*., or rather the experience of the work, in the sense of making, performing and witnessing it, does not yield easily to verbal description. This is, of course, at least partly due to the nature of performance itself: it is concrete, three-dimensional, material, present. *in situ*.'s performances happen in spaces that performers share with audiences, so to experience them involves a sense of 'uncompletability', of awareness of something happening elsewhere. The performance is dispersed, and therefore somehow deferred in space - here but not-here. For the individual audience member, as much as the performer, the performance seems not to depend so much on their presence as upon their potential absence in any given moment, in any given place. The preparation and writing of this thesis has allowed me to reconfigure at least some part of *in situ*.'s practice as writing.

***Bella Stewart***  
***November 2007***

---

<sup>43</sup> Mark Sparrow again, riffing on his performance persona in *Without History*.



## Bibliography

ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas and LONGHURST, Brian, eds, 1998. *Audiences: a sociological theory of performance and imagination*. London: SAGE Publications.

ARLEN, Shelley, 1990. *The Cambridge Ritualists: an annotated bibliography of the works by and about Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray, Francis M. Cornford, and Arthur Bernard Cook*. Metuchen, N.J.; London: Scarecrow.

ARONSON, Arnold, 1985. The Wooster Group's "L.S.D.(...Just the High Points...)". *The Drama Review: TDR*. 29(2), 65-77.

ARTAUD, Antonin, 1993. *The theatre and its double*. London: Calder Publications Limited.

AUDEN, W.H., 1979 [1939]. Musée des Beaux Arts. In: Edward MENDELSON, ed. *W.H. Auden: selected poems*. London: Faber, 1979, pp. 79-80.

AUGÉ, Marc, 1995. *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (trans. J. Howe). London: Verso.

AUSLANDER, Philip, 1992. *Presence and resistance: postmodernism and cultural politics in contemporary American performance [Theater: Theory/Text/Performance]*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

-----, 1997. *From acting to performance: essays in modernism and postmodernism*. London: Routledge.

AUSTIN, J.L., 1975. *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

BACHELARD, Gaston, 1994 [1958]. *The poetics of space* (trans. M. Jolas). Boston, MA.: Beacon Press.

BAL, Mieke, 2000. Memory acts: performing subjectivity. *Performance Research: On Memory*, 5(3), 102-114.

BANES, Sally, 1987. *Terpsichore in sneakers: post-modern dance*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press..

BAPTY, Ian, and YATES, Tim, 1990. *Archaeology after structuralism: post-structuralism and the practice of archaeology*. London: Routledge.

BARAITSER, Lisa, and BAYLY, Simon, 2001. Now and then: psychotherapy and the rehearsal process. In: Patrick CAMPBELL, and Adrian KEAR, eds. *Psychoanalysis and performance*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 60-72.



- BARKER, Francis, 1984. *The tremulous private body: essays on subjection*. London: Methuen.
- BARTHES, Roland, 1977. The grain of the voice. In: Roland BARTHES, ed. *Image-Music-Text*. London: Fontana, 1977, pp. 179-189.
- BARRETT, John, 1988. Fields of discourse. *Critique of Anthropology*, 7(3), 5-16.
- BAZALGETTE, Cary, and BUCKINGHAM, David, eds. *In front of the children: screen entertainment and young audiences*. London: BFI Publishing.
- BECKETT, Samuel, 1990. *The complete dramatic works*. London: Faber.
- BENNETT, Gillian, 1987. *Traditions of belief: women, folklore and the supernatural today*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- BENNETT, Susan, 1997. *Theatre audiences: A theory of production and reception*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.
- BERRY, Cicely, 1973. *Voice and the actor*. London: Harrap.
- BINER, Pierre, c1972. *The Living Theatre*. New York, N.Y.: Horizon Press.
- BINFORD, L.R., 1972. *An archeological perspective*. New York, N.Y.: Seminar Press
- , 1983. *In pursuit of the past*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- BIRINGER, Johannes H. *Theatre, theory, postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- BLAU, Herbert, 1990. *The audience*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- BOAL, Augusto, 1992. *Games for actors and non-actors* (trans. A. Jackson). London: Routledge.
- BOCCACCIO, Giovanni, 1972. *The Decameron* (trans. H. McWilliam). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- BOLLAS, Christopher, 1987. *The shadow of the object: psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press.
- , 1989. *Forces of destiny: psychoanalysis and human idiom*. London: Free Association.
- , 1992. *Being a character: psychoanalysis and self experience*. London: Routledge.
- , 1995. *Cracking up: the work of unconscious experience*. London: Routledge.



- BROWN, Norman.O., 1970. *Life against death: the psychoanalytical meaning of history*. London: Sphere Books.
- BÜCHLI, Victor, 1995. Interpreting material culture: the trouble with text. In: I. HODDER, et al., eds. *Interpreting archaeology*. London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 84-96.
- BURT, Ramsay, 2006. *Judson Dance Theater: performative traces*. London: Routledge.
- CAMPBELL, Fiona, and ULIN, Jonna, 2004. *Borderline Archaeology: a practice of contemporary archaeology - exploring aspects of creative narratives and performative cultural production*. PhD thesis, Department of Archaeology, Göteborg University.
- CAMPBELL, Patrick, and KEAR, Adrian, eds, 2001. *Psychoanalysis and performance*. London: Routledge.
- CARLSON, Marvin, 1996. *Performance: a critical introduction*. London: Routledge.
- CARNICKE, Sharon Marie, 2000. Stanislavsky's system: pathways for the actor. In: Alison HODGE, ed., *Twentieth century actor training*. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.11-36.
- CARTER, Paul, 1996. *The lie of the land*. London: Faber.
- CARUTH, Cathy, 1996. *Unclaimed experience: trauma, narrative and history*. Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- CARSTEN, Janet, and HUGH-JONES, Stephen, eds., 1995. *About the house: Lévi-Strauss and beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CLARKE, David L., 1968. *Analytical archaeology*. London: Methuen.
- CLASSEN, Constance, 1994. *Aroma: the cultural history of smell*. London: Routledge.
- CLEASBY, Adrian, 1996. *Watching the world: British television and audience engagement with developing countries*. [s.l.]: Third World Broadcasting Project.
- CONNOR, Steven, 2000. *Dumbstruck: a cultural history of ventriloquism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- , 2001. Violence, ventriloquism and the vocalic body. In: Patrick CAMPBELL and Adrian KEAR, eds, *Psychoanalysis and performance*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp.75-93.
- Conversation, The*, 1974. Film. Directed by Francis Ford COPPOLA. USA.
- CRACE, Jim, 2000. *Being dead*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.



- CRIMP, Douglas, c1993. *On the museum's ruins*. Cambridge, MA.; London: MIT Press.
- CROW, Thomas E., 1996. *The rise of the sixties: American and European art in the era of dissent*. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.
- DÉAK, Frantisek, 1976. Structuralism in theatre: the Prague School contribution. *The Drama Review*, 20(4): 83-94.
- DEBORD, Guy, c1994. *The society of the spectacle* (trans. D. Nicholson-Smith). New York, N.Y.: Zone Books.
- DE MARINIS, Marco, 1987. Dramaturgy of the spectator. *The Drama Review: TDR*, 31(2), 100-114.
- DEREN, Maya, 1975. *The Voodoo gods*. St Albans: Paladin.
- DIAMOND, Elin, 1992. The violence of "we". In: Janelle REINELT and Joseph ROACH, eds. *Critical theory and performance*. Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 1992, pp. 390-398.
- , 1997. *Unmaking mimesis*. London: Routledge.
- DOUGLAS, Mary, 2003 [c1970]. *Natural symbols*. London: Routledge.
- ECO, Umberto, 1981. *The role of the reader*. London: Hutchinson.
- , 1990. *The limits of interpretation*. Milano: Bompiani.
- EDMONDS, Mark R., 1999. *Ancestral geographies of the Neolithic: landscape, monuments and memory*. London: Routledge.
- EINZIG, Barbara, ed. 1996. *Thinking about art: conversations with Susan Hiller*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- ETCHELLS, Tim, 1999. *Certain fragments: Forced Entertainment and contemporary performance*. London: Routledge.
- FABIAN, Johannes, 2002. *Time and the other: how anthropology makes its object*. 2nd edition. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press.
- FELDMAN, Morton (composer), 1995 [1987]. *Piano, violin, viola, cello*. Audio CD. Therwil, Switzerland: Hat/Hut Records, hatART CD 6158.
- FISCHER, Ernst, 2001. Writing home: post-modern melancholia and the uncanny space of living room theatre. In: Patrick CAMPBELL, and Adrian KEAR, eds. *Psychoanalysis and performance*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 115-131.



FLEMING, Ian, 1957 [1954]. *Live and let die*. London: Pan Books.

FORCED ENTERTAINMENT, 2000. *Notes on the company*. Available at: <<http://www.forced.co.uk/forced/auditions.html>> [Accessed September 2000].

FOUCAULT, Michel, 1973. *The birth of the clinic: an archaeology of medical perception* (trans. A. Sheridan). London: Routledge.

-----, 1977. *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (trans. A. Sheridan). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

-----, 1979. *The history of sexuality. Volume 1: an introduction* (trans. A. Sheridan). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

FRACIJA Performing Arts Magazine, 2004. Special editions on Goat Island's 'When Will the September Roses Bloom?/Last Night Was Only a Comedy'. 32/35.

FRALEIGH, Sondra, and NAKAMURA, Tamah, 2006. *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo [Routledge Performance Practitioners]*. London: Routledge.

FRASCINA, F., 1999. *Art, politics and dissent: aspects of the art left in sixties America*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

FREEMAN, John, 2001. Autobiographical spectatorship. *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts* [online], 2(2). Available at: <URL> [Accessed February 2005].

-----, 2002. Writing the self: the heuristic documentation of performance. *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 22(2), 95-107.

-----, 2004. Performatised secrets, performatised selves. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 14(4), 54-67.

-----, c.2003. *Tracing the footprints: documenting the process of performance*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

FREUD, Sigmund, 1964 [1937]. Constructions in analysis. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 23 (1937-1939)* (trans. J. & A. Strachey). London: The Hogarth Press, 1964, pp. 255-270.

-----, 1976 [1953]. *The interpretation of dreams* (trans. J. Strachey, rev. A. Richards). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

-----, 2003 [1899]. Screen memories. In: *The uncanny* (trans. D. McLintock). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003, pp.1-22.

-----, 2003 [1919]. The uncanny. In: *The uncanny* (trans. D. McLintock). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003, pp. 121-162.



- FRIED, Michael, 1992 [1967]. Art and objecthood. In: HARRISON, Charles and WOOD, Paul, eds. *Art in theory 1900-1990. An anthology of changing ideas*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, pp. 822-834.
- GALÁS, Diamanda, 1991 [1984]. Cris d'aveugle. In: *Plague Mass*. Audio CD. London: Mute Records, CDSTUMM83, track 9.
- GENNEP, Arnold van, 1960. *The rites of passage*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- GOAT ISLAND, [no date]. *Goat Island schoolbook 2*. Chicago, IL.: Goat Island.
- GOAT ISLAND, 1996. Illusio[n]text. *Performance Research* 1(3): 6-10.
- GOODHARDT, G.J. et al., 1975. *The television audience: patterns of viewing*. Farnborough: Saxon House.
- GOLDBERG, RoseLee, 1998. *Performance: live art since the 60s*. 2nd edition. London: Thames and Hudson.
- GOMEZ, Lavinia, 1997. *An introduction to Object Relations*. London: Free Association Books.
- GOULISH, Matthew, 1996. Five microlectures. *Performance Research: On Illusion*, 1 (3), 94-99.
- , 2000a. *39 microlectures: in proximity of performance*. London: Routledge.
- , 2000b. Memory is this. *Performance Research: On Memory*, 5(3), 6-17.
- GRAHAM, W.S., 1979. *Collected poems 1942-1977*. London: Faber.
- HARRISON, Charles and WOOD, Paul, eds, 1992. *Art in theory 1900-1990. An anthology of changing ideas*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- HARRISON, Jane Ellen, 1963. *Themis: a study of the social origins of Greek religion*. London : Merlin Press.
- HAUGHTON, Hugh, 2003. Introduction. In: *The uncanny*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003, pp.vii-lx.
- HEATHFIELD, Adrian, 1997. *Representation and identity in contemporary performance*. PhD thesis, University of Bristol, Faculty of Arts, Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television.
- HEATHFIELD, Adrian, and QUICK, Andrew, 2000. Editorial. *Performance Research: On Memory*, 5(3), 1-3.



- HELMER, Judith, and MALZACHER, Florian, eds, 2004. *"Not even a game anymore": the theatre of Forced Entertainment*. Berlin: Alexander Verlag.
- HERSEY, John, 1972. *Hiroshima*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- HIJIKATA, Tatsumi, 2000. Wind Daruma [Kazedaruma]. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 11 (1), 77.
- HILDEBRAND, W., 1992. Communicative action in the theatre. *Tijdschrift voor Theaterwetenschap*, Jaarg. 8 (31/32), 33-38.
- HILLER, Susan, 1996. Interview. *Transcript - a journal of visual culture* [online], 2 (2.1). Available at:  
<URL:[http://www.dundee.ac.uk/transcript/volume2/issue2\\_1/hiller.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/transcript/volume2/issue2_1/hiller.htm)> [Accessed March 2007]
- HODDER, Ian, ed., 1987. *The archaeology of contextual meanings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- , 1991. *Reading the past: current approaches to interpretation in archaeology*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- , ed., 1989. *The meanings of things: material culture and symbolic expression*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- , et al., eds, 1995. *Interpreting archaeology: finding meaning in the past*. London: Routledge.
- HODGE, Alison, ed., 2000. *Twentieth century actor training*. London: Routledge.
- HOFFMAN, Ethan [photographs] and HOLBORN, Mark, et al.[text], 1987. *Butoh: dance of the dark soul*. New York, N.Y.: Aperture.
- HOLDERNESS, Graham, 1993. Shakespeare Rewound. *Shakespeare Survey*, 45, 63-74.
- HOLTORF, Cornelius, 2006. *From Stonehenge to Las Vegas: archaeology as popular culture*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- HUNTER, G.K., ed., 1967. *Macbeth* [*The New Penguin Shakespeare*]. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- IHDE, Don, 1976. *Listening and voice: a phenomenology of sound*. Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press.
- In a lonely place*, 1950. Film. Directed by Nicholas RAY. USA.



ISER, Wolfgang, 1978. *The act of reading: a theory of aesthetic response*. Baltimore, MD. and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

JACKSON, Shannon, 2004. *Professing performance: theatre in the academy from philology to performativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

JAUSS, Hans Robert, 1982. *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (trans. Timothy Bahti). Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota Press.

KAYE, Nick, 1994. *Postmodernism and performance*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

-----, 2000. *Site-specific art: performance, place and documentation*. London: Routledge.

KEAR, Adrian, 2005. Troublesome amateurs: theatre, ethics and the labour of mimesis. *Performance Research: On Theatre*, 10(1), 26-46.

*Kingdom, The (Riget)*, 1994. TV/Film. Directed by Lars VON TRIER. Denmark.

KIRBY, Michael, 1972. Acting and Not-Acting. *TDR*, 16(1) [T53], 3-15.

KONIJN, E. A., 1992. Waiting for the audience: an empirical study of actors' stage fright and performance. *Tijdschrift voor Theaterwetenschap*, Jaarg. 8 (31/32), 157-182.

-----, 2002. The actor's emotions reconsidered: a psychological task-based perspective. In: Phillip B. ZARRILLI, ed. *Acting (re)considered: a theoretical and practical guide*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2002, pp.62-81

KRASNER, David, 2000. Strasberg, Adler and Meisner: Method acting. In: Alison HODGE, ed., *Twentieth century actor training*. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.129-150.

LACAN, Jacques, 1994 [1973]. *The four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis* (trans. A. Sheridan). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

-----, 2006 [1970]. *Écrits: the first complete edition in English* (trans. B. Fink). New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co.

*Last tango in Paris*, 1972. Film. Directed by Bernardo BERTOLUCCI. Italy/France.

LEHMANN, Hans-Thies, 2006. *Postdramatic theatre* (trans. K. Jürs-Munby). London: Routledge.

LEPECKI, André, 2006. *Exhausting dance: performance and the politics of movement*. London: Routledge.

LEWIS, Lisa, 2000. Capel Pennant - the place I am in. *Performance Research: Openings* 5(1), 42-53.



LINGWOOD, James, ed., 2004. *Susan Hiller: Recall: selected works 1969-2004*. Gateshead: Baltic.

LOMAS, Peter, 1994. *Cultivating intuition: an introduction to psychotherapy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

MACDONALD, Claire, 2003. Editorial: In Viva Voce. *Performance Research: Voices*, 8(1), 1-4.

MATEJKA, L. and TITUNIK, I.R., eds, c1976. *Semiotics of art: Prague School contributions*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.

McFADYEN, Lesley, 2007. Mobile spaces of Mesolithic Britain. *Home Cultures*, 4(2), 107-118.

MUIR, Kenneth, ed., 1984 [1951]. *Macbeth [The Arden Shakespeare]*. Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson & Sons.

MUKAROVSKÝ, Jan, 1978. *Structure, sign and function: selected essays [Yale Russian and East European Studies 14]* (trans. J. Burbank and P. Steiner). New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press.

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, 2002 [online]. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <<http://dictionary.oed.com>> [Accessed March 2007].

PANTHEATRE, 2005. Forum Archives for the 12th Myth and Theatre Festival, 04.07.05-17.07.05 [online]. Available at: <[http://pantheatre.free.fr/pages/forum\\_MV05\\_voices.pdf](http://pantheatre.free.fr/pages/forum_MV05_voices.pdf)> [Accessed March 2005].

PARDO, Enrique, 1998. The Angel's Hideout: between dance and theatre. *Performance Research: On Place*, 3(2), 19-26.

-----, 2003. Figuring out the voice: object, subject, project - performing strategies in the use of extended voice range techniques in relation to language. *Performance Research: Voices*, 8(1), 41-50

PARKER, Andrew and SEDGWICK, Eve Kosofsky, 1995. *Performativity and performance*. London: Routledge.

PATRIK, Linda, 1985. Is there an archaeological record? In: M. Schiffer, ed. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, Volume 8, 1988. New York, N.Y.: Academic Press, 27-62.

PEARSON, Mike and SHANKS, Michael, 2001. *Theatre Archaeology*. London: Routledge.



- PHELAN, Peggy, 1993. *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London: Routledge.
- , 1997. *Mourning sex: performing public memories*. London: Routledge.
- PHELAN, Peggy, and LANE, Jill, eds, c1998. *The ends of performance*. New York, N.Y.: New York University Press.
- PHILLIPS, Adam, 1989. *Winnicott [Fontana Modern Masters]*. London: HarperCollins.
- , 1994. *On flirtation*. London: Faber.
- PIKES, Noah, 2004. *Dark voices: the genesis of the Roy Hart Theatre*. 2nd edition. New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal Books.
- PLANT, Sadie, 1992. *The most radical gesture: the Situationist International in a postmodern age*. London: Routledge.
- POTOLSKY, Matthew, 2006. *Mimesis [The New Critical Idiom]*. London: Routledge.
- Queen Christina*, 1933. Film. Directed by Rouben MAMOULIAN. USA.
- QUICK, Andrew, 2000. Resisting memorialisation: an interview with Fiona Templeton. In: *Performance Research: On Memory*, 5(3), 115-124.
- QUINN, Michael L., 1995. *The semiotic stage: Prague School Theater Theory [Pittsburgh Studies in Theatre and Culture 1]*. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.
- RAINER, Yvonne, 1965. Some Retrospective Notes on a Dance for 10 People and 12 Mattresses Called "Parts of Some Sextets," Performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March, 1965. *Tulane Drama Review*, 10(2), 168-178.
- RAUDIVE, Konstantins, 1971. *Breakthrough: an amazing experiment in electronic communication with the dead* (trans. N. Fowler). Gerrards Cross: Smythe.
- READ, Alan, 1993. *Theatre and everyday life: an ethics of performance*. London: Routledge.
- REINELT, Janelle G. and ROACH, Joseph R., eds, 1992. *Critical theory and performance*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- RIDOUT, Nicholas, 2006. *Stage fright, animals and other theatrical problems [Theatre and Performance Theory]*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ROACH, Joseph, c1985. *The player's passion: studies in the science of acting*. Newark, N.J.: University of Delaware Press.



- ROSE, Steven, 1993. *The making of memory*. London: Bantam Books.
- RUDLIN, John, 1994. *Commedia dell'Arte: an actor's handbook*. London: Routledge.
- SANDFORD, Mariellen R., ed., 1995. *Happenings and other acts*. London: Routledge.
- SAVRAN, David, 1985. The Wooster Group, Arthur Miller and 'The Crucible'. *The Drama Review: TDR*, 29(2), 99-109.
- , 1988. *Breaking the rules: the Wooster Group*. New York, N.Y.: Theatre Communications Group.
- SCHECHNER, Richard, 1982. The decline and fall of the (American) Avant-Garde. In: PERFORMING ARTS JOURNAL (PAJ), *The end of humanism*. New York, N.Y.: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, pp.11-76
- , c.1985. *Between theater and anthropology*. Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press
- , 1988. *Performance theory*. London: Routledge.
- , 2002. *Performance studies: an introduction*. London: Routledge
- SCHECHNER, Richard, and APPEL, Willa, eds, 1990. *By means of performance: intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SCHLESINGER, Philip, et al., 1992. *Women viewing violence*. London: British Film Institute in association with The Broadcasting Standards Council.
- SECESSION [Gallery], 2005. *Catherine Sullivan: The Chittendens*. Vienna: Secession.
- SHANKS, Michael, 1992. *Experiencing the past: on the character of archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- SHANKS, Michael, and TILLEY, Christopher, c1987. *Social theory and archaeology*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- , 1992. *Re-constructing archaeology: theory and practice*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.
- SHOHAM, C., 1992. Organizing the spectator's reaction in the theatre. *Tijdschrift voor Theaterwetenschap*, Jaarg. 8(31/32), 69-84.
- SKUNK ANANSIE, 1999. We don't need who you think we are. In: *Post-Orgasmic Chill*. Audio CD. London: Virgin Records, B00000IY06, track 3.



- SOFAER, Joshua, 2000. Conflict of interest: performance as a spectator. *In: Performance Research: Openings*, 5(1), 120-125.
- STANISLAVSKY, Konstantin, 1980 [c1936]. *An actor prepares* (trans. E. Reynolds Hapgood). London: Eyre Methuen.
- STEWART, Susan, 1993. *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- STRASBERG, Lee, 1988. *A dream of passion: the development of the Method*. London: Bloomsbury.
- SUNDELL, Margaret, 2003. Repeat performance: the art of Catherine Sullivan. *Artforum*, XLII(2), October, 16-19.
- TATE GALLERY, LIVERPOOL, 1996. *Susan Hiller*. London: Tate Gallery.
- TAUSSIG, Michael T., 1993. *Mimesis and alterity*. London: Routledge.
- THOMAS, Julian, 1996. *Time, culture and identity: an interpretative archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- , ed., 2000. *Interpretive archaeology: a reader*. London: Leicester University Press.
- TILLEY, Christopher Y., 1990. *Reading material culture: structuralism, hermeneutics and post-structuralism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- , 1991. *Material culture and text: the art of ambiguity*. London: Routledge.
- , ed., 1993. *Interpretative archaeology*. Oxford: Berg.
- , 1994. *A phenomenology of landscape: places, paths and monuments*. Oxford: Berg.
- TILLEY, Christopher, with the assistance of Wayne BENNETT, 2004. *The materiality of stone*. Oxford: Berg.
- TURNER, Cathy, [n.d.]. *Framing the site* [online]. Available at: <<http://www.mis-guide.com/ws/documents/tqt/ct.html>> [Accessed Jan. 2005]
- , 2004. Palimpsest or potential space? Finding a vocabulary for site-specific performance. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 20(4), 373-390.
- TURNER, Graeme, 1993. *Film as social practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Routledge.
- TURNER, Victor, 1969. *The ritual process*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.



- , 1974. *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- , 1982. *From ritual to theater*. New York, N.Y.: Performing Arts Journal Press.
- TUSHINGHAM, David, 1996. How long do you have to have lived somewhere before you're allowed to lie about it?. Interview with Tim Etchells. *In*: TUSHINGHAM, David, ed. *Live 4: freedom machine*. London: Nick Hern Books, pp.51-58.
- TYTELL, John, 1997. *The Living Theatre: art, exile and outrage*. London: Methuen.
- UNNIKRISHNAN, Namita, 1996. *The impact of television advertising on children*. New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- VANEIGEM, Raoul, 1994. *The revolution of everyday life* (trans. D. Nicholson-Smith). 2nd rev. ed.. London: Rebel Press/Left Bank Books.
- VEBLEN, Thorstein, 1973 [1900]. *The theory of the leisure class*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- VIDLER, Anthony, 1992. *The architectural uncanny: essays in the modern unhomely*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- VOORT, T.H.A. van der, 1986. *Television violence: a child's eye view*. Amsterdam; Oxford: North-Holland.
- WALLACE, Jennifer, 2004. *Digging the dirt: the archaeological imagination*. London: Duckworth.
- WATERSON : CARTHY, 2002. Death and the lady. *In*: *A dark light*. Audio CD. London: Topic Records, TSCD536, track3.
- WELLS, H.G., 1993. *The war of the worlds*. London: Dent.
- WHEALE, Nigel, 1991. Scratched Shakespeare: video-teaching the Bard. *In*: Lesley AERS and Nigel WHEALE, eds., *Shakespeare in the changing curriculum*. London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 63-75.
- WILKIE, Fiona, 2002a. Mapping the terrain: a survey of site-specific performance in Britain. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 18(2), 140-160.
- , 2002b. Kinds of place at Bore Place: site-specific performance and the rules of spatial behaviour. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 18(3), 243-260.
- Wings of Desire (Der Himmel über Berlin)*, 1987. Film. Directed by Wim WENDERS. W. Germany/France.



WINNICOTT, Donald W., 1971. *Playing and reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

WOLF, Eric R., c1982. *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

ZARRILLI, Phillip B., 2002. *Acting (re)considered: a theoretical and practical guide*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.



# **TEXT BOUND INTO THE SPINE**



Nov 21.4.02

mid in w/chair - need to display more & play up lecturing  
- move like he was (by hand) in Decameron.

Normal unbalanced need to be lit - their faces must be visible.

up on table shining onto them directly -

Normal testimonies are still too many, too long ones. More  
shorter need to be interspersed.

type of table with bookish as much better. Projector too dim  
light.

er - exposure produces better images. It needs tidying up visually  
sketches & uniform clothing - also more space & reg. intervals  
between them.

next up exhaustion needed - Salma making face q&e text v. good.

that it goes on & we've just come on it - that he list is  
mute and they have to go through everything with an exhaustive  
ring.

next up transmittance indoor scene or ceremony to a large crowd  
side - the slight finding is acceptable up that feeling can  
heightened - creating a more intimate 'indoor' atmosphere  
formal upturn - emphasize contrast w. open & bright  
starts viewing area.

need to film, not read.

some kind of backcloth ed. be hung over or from those wires it  
create a 'chamber' or screened-off area.

keep a restricted area up there which be better.

shining q&e section -

then work back an eye contact - communicate w. audience -  
you're communicating it not rec. the ideas - but your  
status as a performer.

like to try further script in and attempting to guide - but  
impossible - visualisation increase this & ensure them  
any texts for eg.

question-answering compatible with Butcher? or you break Butcher  
never question? but body still be trying to contact?

think Butcher should be approached after a few disturbances



think about what Butch preparations might be - what will it look like.  
white make-up - head-wraps - white clothes etc? Vests  
hat other costumes / looks? Include Mark + Colin, Piggot + Steve.  
~~not go objects~~ for people to follow - for Piggot + boy.  
have food + are separate.

can we get any calipers for measuring (Steve + Piggot)  
design a form for Steve to fill in - all usual details +  
name + burial details - other questions - about colour naming - magical  
beliefs, foodways, kinship etc.

~~But not~~ how the guides get up here + start ship Butch.  
Mark's manner might encourage audience remarks - have to remind  
them not to speak to performers.

Don't want like the Proj. / Purr relationship - should be more  
serene + detached - it's a bit Woman Wisdom / Mr Ginsdale -

Colin / Mark relationship is good - conspiratorial undertone.



Gauze 'boxes'  
for Butch?

(hung from balcony - sh. be v. light weight -  
nylon thread, balsa + gauze just attached at  
top - so wd float. Co they be lit from above too?  
They'd be easy to remove in daytime

down to floor level? - just (c. 2 cm?) above?

we're + recommendations + question And. occur at threshold.  
two guides with motif previous one has stated readings  
we should possibly photograph them too - using instant camera?

Colin + Mark can sometimes get with closer proximity - Thecla in  
Thecla-like.



form rehearsal 17.4.02

in, Sakura, Colin, Mark, Iain, Piggot, Steve (x George)

build-up - vocalisation with & without movement in warm-ups, think whether this vocalisation / musical build-up work can be incorporated into piece - maybe up an anthropology as being justified. Do when not doing butch?

linked judging - texts - butch - vocalisation.

is sequenced - be just that - it progress from one site to another like a procession coming on them.

type of - be motivated or provoked by play?

particularly language-like sounds - memory of voices.

Does it being underway atmosphere which is channelled

through performers & bursts through from time to time

keeping certain kinds of performance (containing

music, ones) for individuals.

ending - Colin & Mark - maybe less of an adversarial relationship on Colin's side - impression that he's taking

Mark - Maybe just friendship wd be better - need like a

balancing relationship - as if you do this a lot. There's some

connection between you - that the piece is on the audience of Mark.

mid guiding persona - camp - but can bring back 'caveman'

thinking about picturing these things - how you frame them

maybe. Visual images connected with them & the people

you're associated with. About how things are seen. This

is bound up with camp anyway.

we - need to think about the persona - something serene  
than lady.

humal - table needs to be elevated into a dais of some

sort - chair likewise. Mirrors are possibly needed - although

it is very open.

filmed on fixed camera - as from operated it - filmed live

projected onto gallery ceiling from opposite balcony.

also w. tribunal on closed-off part of balcony.



the re-enactment of a scene, if he is 'signed' as non-speaking, explicit or implied character.

He starts to make his 'own' signs, which are the names of speaking characters. Through this, he is able to use the formal constraint under which he operates to allow him to take part as well as investigate.

Through this he can develop a voice and begin to have 'memory breakthroughs' like the others.

Is Steve's actual relationship to the re-enactments further problematised by this? What is the nature of his 'access' to them - has it shifted from not 'knowing the words' to being able to recall them? Is he 'reading the atmosphere' somehow to 'decide' which scene to 'investigate' before, and now (with speaking-character signs) making conscious decisions about what he 'wants'? How does this affect the others' attitude to setting up scenes themselves? Might they even now be able to 'reject' Steve's suggestions - as products of an ego rather than the unquestioning will of an exterior(ised) force?

What does it do to the power of the scenes if they are not precipitated in this strange, mediumistic way? Perhaps this is a clearer indication of the characters' beginning to negotiate and manoeuvre through these fragments in order to assert something for themselves, to forge identities and have relationships with each other. Steve's submission 'gives the signal' or emphasised this.

3.00

Formal & informal levels of performance of scenes:

formal - set up by Steve's plugging. 2 players join & wait for audience, who'll be uninterested.

informal - accidentally being in place or hints in spoken texts etc.  
eg. someone being in the right place + so forth during the line.

Keep the emotion or sense or state when doing any scene - move from it into performance. 'On our terms' in performance.

Use of scenes to 'have relationships' - talking through the texts.

Relation to the 'outside' - Sweeney scene as catalyst for fear/anxiety about outside opportunity for door to be opened. - Katrina - anxiety and error - just the weirdness of it. Creates a jumping-off point for whoever's



to alternate up & downstairs, moving systematically through 7 scenes.  
anyone tried talking about the scenes.

expression as Terry when Brandon cocked up the Troy/Wene scene - v.  
nature - as if he was somehow 'owning' the interference.

could K. have gone further? On the way up to the interview room?

to replay scenes straight away informally. Beat - then memories,  
times.

Brandon know about texts which haven't been performed yet?

expression again - (like the enigmatic smile - but not too much,  
speculating about how much the others 'know' about the approx - business.  
standing on tippy-toes for everything.

you not being able to read her post - it's after a while.

everyone's enjoyment of TTS transmission

you can be heard muttering behind the door - good. Repetition of the  
is - maybe some speculation too?

it would happen if PP prelates from Pam coming in while I am was  
missing a transmission? They have to wait outside - maybe go into  
myne - as a calmer.

and watching the whispered intimate T/I scene enacted by Pam & K.  
chapters -

secret collecting up her appraisals.

Brandon don't hang around - get to work - try and call a seminar

everyone's gone - remind you're got to go. Looking around

up to get some final pieces of information

- 'one last look'?

intimate relations developing between cast members - Pete & Iain. planning the  
version/transmissions - it's as if P. is watching him dress up in collaboration  
to some secret ritual of transformation. Almost a sexual intimacy - maybe  
camera's 'voyeurism'? contributes to/creates this.

and and Brandon also - more a push-you-pull-me relationship - kneeling  
persuading. See-saw of power - when D. 'helps' or guides B - when B refuses  
follow train suggested by D.

timeliness - in some playing of some transmissions - eg. Troy and Irene



through 3.10 start -  
 when - look out of window into places & people in - I have  
 feeling I 'catch you looking' as opposed to the other way round.  
 Steve - doing the photographs - be more concerned with your modesty.  
 Clare don't try places.  
 Steve - strong in image - skirt.  
 Steve - v. good intervention into register - but should have been  
 line at of the image that you should have stayed.  
 Phil on open post-reporter doing dinner.  
 Clare - not sure about sitting in corner in kitchen - although whoopie  
 conspiratorial style is v. good.  
 - Phil v. good at 'erotic listening' as well as jazz.  
 - Lani - there's a danger of it being a little slow.  
 Mike v. good box premiere doing 'referring' story.  
 These sound-holding positions are just setting crapper and crapper.  
 Brandon counting down too quick - missing out sections of story -  
 how did she die? what was the 'terrible question'?  
 Steve - good low-level hanging out with water doing register.  
 Really brilliant post-reporter (maybe from Sarah - met. looking. It's got  
 a sub of post-coital trite about it - Phidget depressed on stage.  
 - there's a nice dance is v. good - great sense of being desperate to get off it.  
 - gone beyond limit of what's interesting - why post - before Sarah  
 - crossingly emerges from looking place.  
 Steve sat on log with seat down.  
 - Pete's very nice light suggested - thriller-like.  
 - There are some very striking 'accidental' images - eg. 2 men putting  
 their trousers on in either side of a bed...  
 - Brandon best Schubert ever with angel wings + halo in blue light.  
 I think that the Coates' grip on for so long makes it a bit inferno-ic.  
 - everyone goes into a depressed/panic frenzy.

2.11.00

Technique issues - sculpture-making in first 15 minutes - everyone having same idea  
 too much of it going on. Need to emphasise and determine the first time it  
 takes place like 1st enactment in 'Transmission'.  
 Don't lose the massive investment in very careful sculpting - faces, fingertips  
 etc.



ke - do you need to make more effort to encounter (ami) for a box session?  
w establish what priority the box has, say vis-a-vis model-making  
2.

ok - done Sarah for breaking up sleepy drucast mood - although  
not cheerful - too much (be careful of Brandon & the chair).  
would have preferred a sharper intervention...

good (ami) - getting the drink.

one about the walking 'Moss Page' - better to just sit there  
puppet has turned into the devil.

when mood goes down - don't everybody absorb it. The last stretch  
before the Galas was sluggish and leaden - too many being asked  
to put out enough resistance. A fight for a bit but not sustained  
by everyone present.

make sit in a more sensible place for final photo.

remember to tie up the marker habit - looks much better.

Clare don't grab the nearest person.

over the upstairs ex-thermostat with gaffer.

on the watch note flies - they go to half-mast pretty easily.

there & the longer you stay - the bigger the break - just pushing on the  
isn't enough.

there - creep around & tell the devil story from little hiding places. - don't  
try still.

find a way of turning music off - not leave it to play.

change between

there - too much chickenpox. (20) cheer up.

there - don't underestimate by smiling right in the audience's face.

" have a giffing put a something when you finish the last Mara  
story.



knocking will have to be done on an inner door - otherwise risk of audience members setting off alarm.

Jane (+ everyone questioning Steve) - don't ask 'exam' questions - ask v. precise ones i.e. who murders Duncan? etc.

Sarah - good reading of that text. - nervous of its meaning.  
Steve - what gets you doing serial killers + hell-gate poster - what makes you ask someone to knock for you?

Jane - don't act triumphant - sleepwalk or something.  
Don't perform over a video - if it comes on - long? I think.  
You missed an opportunity for a playing of that scene - it came out of the psychoanalysis - you need to keep it in that atmosphere & tone.

Sarah - keep a hold of the doll - no need to pretend it's a baby - treat it as your interest or point to Lami - your 'indifference'.

2nd walkthrough:

Steve - go even more into a corner - more private thing.

Jane don't wake up before the knock.

Geoff - more bumping sleepwalk - you're too co-ordinated - hands in pockets etc.

Turning off music that's been put on - thank you Sarah.  
Is the interview too long?

Walk with dagger - like knocking i.e. only interference to dagger?

I wonder if Rob & Jane & Lami all have overlapped scenes here with Jane shouting 'I have given birth' while Rob was still doing her previous scene?

Are the videos too long? Can they be chopped in and out? to allow other things to happen.



being from readthrough: -

- if 'a drum, a drum' is witches one to leave readthrough & go into bedroom to be witches - then it's Poppet's (& whoever is 'his' Bangoo) to encounter the scene - also upstairs - maybe they go into bedroom and are encountered by women rather than other way round.

3 Lady Macbeths should do 'come you spirits' to mirror reflection - either all together or (better this) into different mirrors separately. Emphasises dual nature as witches & Lady - or is that too cheekily obvious? Maybe also watched by Macbeths or - if all together - by Rob?

Always consider who's left in the readthrough.

I iii - Macbeth & Poppet - persuasion scene - maybe 1 Mac + 3 Ladies. Can always be 'taken' by another Macb - leaving Poppet with emotional insecurities which can be carried into another scene of abuse - about what it means to be human, looking for help and other etc....

Dressing of Brandon in a bloody nightshirt by whom - women or just one - after or prior to an interview - Dave? Then he's 'sent in' to lie on bed.

II ii - knocking - who? - one of the women again - or some minion they've instructed to do it - Rob? (it can't be Steve because of his relation to the hell-pate porter).

Discovering - of murder - should have everyone except maybe one person holding put in readthrough.

Omen's scene II is potential for a bit of witch weirdness while it's being read - no need to 'act out' things.

Should women be murderers? - having been 'beguiled' in interview room. - balalaikas etc? George & Macb. for this.

Murder of Bangoo - Steve is playing & for this - to George's Macb. Should there have practised this bit before? - i.e. George making Steve take the note to the bathroom in silence - or only with instructions - killing scene essentially thought of as a film of readthrough to film that and other bits.

We wd. need a 2nd camera - Steve's? - this might give the possibility of a film - similar to 'Father' - of just the murders or deaths



2.00

R. has learned texts - voodoo ghost possession + further illnesses, except from 'Live and let die'.

Voodoo material must be linked up to 'LTD' otherwise danger of 'anthology' aspect.

R's not much more a cycle of 'the last hour' with diversions - Pete etc.

Also increasing apprehension. Pete manipulating - putting out bottles - making him go into certain rooms etc. hanging up the clothes etc.

R. needs to be silently stirred to do last one.

B's possessions - on eliminating in 18-year-old self. Plant actions earlier - mirror sequences etc.

Voice-work scene - after my TV interview - leave scene when voice approximation becomes more than B can bear.

Drift with R's imaginary space - by 'pollinating' - imagistic + abstract - whispered etc. 'What's he doing now?' sense of dream travellers who can ask each other questions etc.

Whatever R. does is a clue that needs to be interpreted.

12. 2.00 - after last night's discussion: -

Near ending - needs big dramatic moment - hysteria etc. Violence to get him downstairs.

B. don't uncover - flower man - P. will.

Drinking must be talked about by B. before possession.

Installations - upstairs: -

- taproom - white drapery on bookshelves - blank walls - w. photographs? maybe just 2 portraits? what about text? - something should be produced with/from the text I make from my 'listening'. Phrases + sentences on the walls? bench(es)?

- Pete's room - T.V.'s - still pictures, live relays, recorded material from earlier, thymoset interviews?



under

- 3 holes / depressions / 'grave' shapes  
or  $\frac{1}{2}m^2$  holes, with nightlights in them.

### Additional thoughts / notes / material.

- 'loss' of Michael Stenst is a concern. Narrative (such as it is) needs to be clearer or more consistent in level of his involvement / presence.
- tape in study could be discussion of 'archaeology' - his father in Mesopotamia + Coelestia-on-Usk - his early memory of the Roman tale. His own archaeology later - its unfinishedness. How he started, how much he really knew etc. It seems important that his story or things connected to him crop up only on tape.
- I considered an 'interlude' which could involve entering the bedroom briefly on the way to the study. A tape could be playing about the medical notes - maybe just readings & the performer could hurriedly turn this off - after standing around listening to it for a bit - as if it 'comes to settle' on her (dressed as him) somehow - man's jacket and special forces coat? wet hair and slick back) and she needs to shake it off. Another tape is also playing - with only sobbing on it. This is not turned off when everyone is ushered out of the room. The player corpse could be covered during this bit and revealed at the 'preventing' 'ritual', when the sobbing tape would be turned off.

13.11.97 - work on 'Vices' project - Richard, Martin, Pete, Bella.

Object work last night - Objects (field glass, spirit level, commando hat, holy medal case with 'Apostle ship of prayer' card, rosary bead, Jude face, propelling pencil in red box) out on table. I talked about each at length - with associations, stories, histories, speculations. Videoed by Pete.

Decided it was in need of 'disavowal' - me, my wife, the objects, handled or otherwise needed to be split off into separate components.

Don't like objects scattered haphazardly about house in 'strange places' Maybe should all be placed in explicit conditions - isolated as it were?



es' project 16.10.99

at work - distinction between objects? i.e. objects of history, those  
'clear' origins, uses, provenance and those which are allusive,  
representational, metonymic. Is this false? Aren't all objects  
blended with these qualities.

'inhabiting' the audience rather than their being 'witnessing'.  
Putting people in 'the inside' - inclusion, their own lives etc.  
making them something - an object. ('Inside' the niche - of a  
work of art - Adorno)

recorded sound - speakers behind screen which is like orchestra  
the speaker. Voice emanating from 'secret' place - e.g. behind  
themselves - locatable but not visible source. Or documentary -  
the reader in the room, in front of people. Or in something  
e.g. a mask or some other substitute speaker.

Recordings:

- descriptions of objects, photographs, pictures, videos, the rooms themselves,  
the contents of the room - either with or without lies.
- descriptions of people, living & dead
- direct addresses to audience e.g. 'sit down' or something which  
engages, instructs, reassures or asks them to perform things
- accounts of events, stories.
- quotations from books
- 'haunted' voices, ravings, spirit voices, possessions
- machine noises, non-verbals, electronically-manipulated sounds
- rappings, knockings, creakings - 'mediumistic' sounds

recording of bangings in Richard's study - too random & didn't  
quite work. Then recording of voice ('let me out' etc) in cupboard  
banging too. Banging didn't work - when played back but ended  
when played back under the stairs.

Idea of music coming from under the stairs.  
Recorded monologue in other cupboard in my study - very quiet was best  
that puts out that silence v. important - needed more pauses  
+ more relevance to the room itself - i.e. 'that' chair, is the door



Indie Project. 12.12.98

mpg of white noise from between radio stations. 1 tape filled in  
1 way.

and tape of sections of 3-4 minutes of 'silence'.

age of person listening close to player.

trying to taped sound and simultaneously 'translating'  
questions and answers where only questioner is audible - as if  
was one on tape.

mp to Radio 4 voices

survive talk over playback of white noise

France talk - talking about the dead over playback of white noise.  
superimposing the dead.

trip out on tape of voices recorded as seances etc. in  
survive talk.

questioning in France

seance with tape recorder.

fragments of 'dying' text. Leave lying around. Pick them up  
and read.

Richard's 'discourse' text.

Kenney Everett & the origa board. - folded into 16 wickets with  
and the midwife. Various deaths & coincidences.

Picking up & doing jobs. Too restless & bumbling.

- Bell's 'discourse' text.

Sustained monologue. Done while keeping perfectly still and  
with odd breaks which precipitate a movement into another  
room. The material is personal - 'the dead in my life'.

Delivered framed of 'sincerity' not odd though. Effectively  
this means eliminating 'and' and 'also' and 'even', words like  
'Anyway....' etc. Quite successful. Recorded & played back  
in room just left.

es of the dead. Names and circumstances of death on  
pieces of paper. Read out in different ways. Putting with  
current files (accidents, murders, suicides, natural causes etc)  
random files. Other person doing a job and feeling  
lost of names. Fairly mounting exercise to listen to, also